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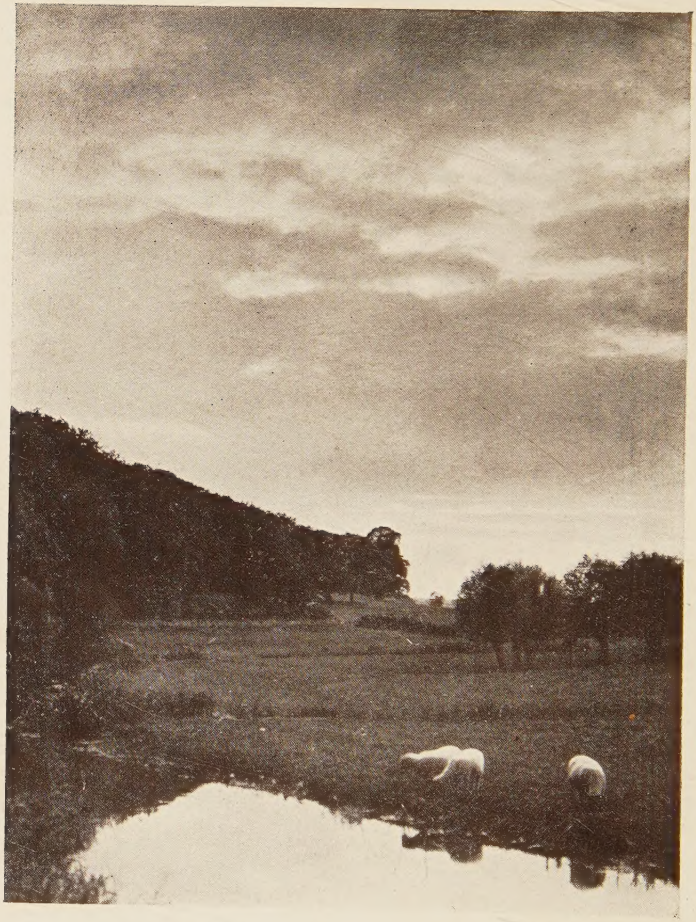

BEHIND BURFORD PRIORY

942

A CORNER OF THE COTSWOLDS

THROUGH THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

BY

M. STURGE GRETTON

AUTHOR OF
"GEORGE MEREDITH, NOVELIST, POET, REFORMER,"
ETC.

"Telling a tale not too importunate
To those who in the sleepy region stay."
The Earthly Paradise—WILLIAM MORRIS.

WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO THE ONE PERSON I HAVE KNOWN
TO WHOM THE ABSENT WERE AS REAL
AS THE PRESENT

TO MY MOTHER

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Note.—For the photographs of the Courtyard of the Little House, Burford, and of the New Cottages, Upper Slaughter, I am indebted to David Crichton, Esq. The Frontispiece, Taynton, and Ablington were taken by Mr. Foster of Burford; all the rest (excepting the two of Tetsworth) are by Messrs. Taunt of Oxford.

A CORNER OF THE COTSWOLDS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

ELEVEN years ago I published a book about North-West Oxfordshire. It was welcomed with more enthusiasm than it can altogether have deserved; for I was at that time a novice at book-making, as well as a new-comer to the district I wrote about. None the less, it is because of certain words accorded to that essay that I turn now after lapse of years, and from books of quite other kinds, to begin upon this one. A leading reviewer then urged me to set to work upon an Oxfordshire volume confined to the records of one century only—and that one the latest. I could wish it had been possible to follow this

advice when it was given. The years since have crept over landmarks ; a number of the old people I hob-a-nobbed with in the spring of 1900 are dead, many of those who live on have lost touch with their memories. I cannot write now, as I was able to write then, of an inhabitant of the district who had talked often in his youth with a man who had carried food to the Young Pretender and his followers, nor of a cottager whose favourite reminiscence was his father's account of the battle of Waterloo. These, and similar persons, have passed away, and innumerable pictures and details, now irrecoverable, have passed away with them.

How was it, from time to time lately I found myself asking, that there seemed fewer old people, fewer curious and valuable traditions, than there had been in my visits to these villages ten years ago ? I had to search for my answer ; and now it is found, it is at the root of my work. I and my generation, who ten years ago were merely receivers of records, are to-day part of the records themselves. We saw the light while a quarter of the last century had yet to come ; now a generation has risen that has seen the new century only. " The

nineteenth century" begins to sound in our children's ears as "the eighteenth century" did in our own. In mere date, the nineteenth century lies very much nearer, but it is not closer in fact; for the past gets snowed under by the present with much greater rapidity now. We, because we had been born well back into them, and because grandparents on whose knees we sat had seen their beginning, thought of the Eighteen-hundreds as all more or less modern. Of the degree in which they had transformed the face of our country and the minds of our people we knew very little; generally speaking, 1800 shut down on the period we thought of as "history." Yet as an eyewitness of most of the nineteenth century's changes has lately reminded us, there is a wider difference between the England of to-day and the England of 1840 than any that existed between the England of George II and the England of Charles I.[1] By no means the least of the pleasures this work has afforded me is some increase in power of distinguishing between the decades of the last century. Dates of the Eighteen-hundreds, cut upon village tomb-

[1] *The Battle of Life*, T. E. Kebbell, page 58.

stones, begin to emerge from their grey similarity, and to assume a separate colour and significance. The clothes, the pastimes—the very thoughts—of the persons they commemorate, in 1800, 1830, 1870, and 1890, are so extraordinarily different.

Land Enquiries, Liberal or Conservative, are not at present nearly intensive enough. To consider England in groups of counties is to ignore her chief characteristic. To visitors from our colonies and from broader lands everywhere the survival of striking local differences in character and architecture and custom, within an area minute enough to suffer the Yankee jest that trains travelling it at speed must run over the edge, is a never-ceasing surprise. American pleasure in the quality has been delightfully expressed by Mrs. Wharton in the words, "It was one of the ever-recurring wonders of the whole incredibly compressed island that for the production of its effects so little went so far, that so few miles made a distance, and so short a distance a difference." To me personally no other consideration affords so rich a sense of our English inheritance. How "thick," as Mr. Henry James would say,

lies our national texture! Into how tiny an island the genius of race has packed and pleated fold upon fold of variety of custom and spiritual atmosphere!

It would be idle to deny that much that is valuable and attractive has been, and is being, lost from the countryside. Many beauties have gone; but we are in a transitional period, and it well may be that, in some instances at least, better things are coming in place of the old. In my childhood—I could not, I think, have been more than eight or nine years of age—I was taken to call upon an old Chartist. What I expected I do not now know, but to this day I remember my keen disappointment in the invalid and his comfortable, colourless surroundings. Of all he may have said I remember only one thing, and that I am certain I did not at the time find impressive. Yet in recent years I have wondered at moments by what alchemy the old man was able to inscribe on a mind of that age what was to be so indelible—to write, so to speak, in invisible ink which time would reveal. His emotion and idealism must have reached out, I suppose, through that half-sulky child to generations to be. He told me

that I, when I grew up, would hear people saying that the world I lived in was no happier a place than it had been. "When they tell you that," he said, "you tell them that I and your grandfather used to see as many as fourteen men hanged in a row, as we rode into Worcester." Most people nowadays find themselves able to rejoice in our changed penal code; but there are many who fear that sentiment may be undermining our national structure. So there seems place for another memory that returns to me as I come in the old Oxfordshire newspapers upon early drafts of the Anti-Slavery Act, with violent opposition and prophecies from the West India merchants, and news of troops being mustered for despatch to the Islands.[1] My mother's father used to describe to his children, in Montserrat, planters' dinner-tables, at which he had been the only guest who abstained from the customary toast of "Damnation to Wilberforce," and yet go on to tell of the placid, the almost cheerful, way in which Abolition, when it actually came, was accepted. Humanity often feels, and invari-

[1] "We are not apprehensive of commotion among the slaves; but the masters display a different temper." *The Oxford Journal*, 17 August, 1833.

ably asserts, that every considerable change it is faced with must prove catastrophic. Any tendency of our own in this direction will best be allayed by a study of the revolutions which in prospect horrified our grandfathers and then were quietly assimilated.

For the purposes of this book no exact geographical definitions are necessary. The scheme of it is historical, and not topographical. The country I write of lies in East Gloucestershire and North-West Oxfordshire. In the main it is the tableland between the Coln and the Evenlode; for, although Painswick and the Stroud valley are slightly west of this, wherever I speak of them I am invariably speaking of conditions that spread eastward to Oxfordshire.[1] I have not attempted to work out the history of single places any more than I have attempted to write a guide to them. Within a district which seems to me an unmistakable unity I have selected occurrences from here and there according as they appeared significant

[1] In the matter of the illustrations of The Swan Inn, Tetsworth, I have gone to the other side of Oxford. So good a picture of a coaching inn was not obtainable nearer, and The Swan is on the "London and Milford Haven Mail Road," which goes through Burford, Northleach, and Cheltenham to Gloucester.

and characteristic. The district lies from 300 feet to 600 feet above the sea-level; climbing in gentle undulations from the Oxford plain to the Cotswolds. The ridges are stone-walled and wind-swept, but the valleys are rich in trees and channelled by miniature rivers. With few exceptions, the towns are in the valleys and off the high roads. The bluestone roads miss all our choicest possessions. What, for instance, can the highway traveller from Witney to Northleach tell of the Windrush—Asthall and Swinbrook, Widford and Taynton, and even Burford? Our buildings are of native stone (nearly every village had at one time its quarry), and numbers of them belong to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Most of the mansions were injured by eighteenth-century rebuilding;[1] but manors and farms and cottages are many of them as they were with the Stuarts. Cotswold houses, with their limestone shards, steep pitches, and prominent gables, are a recognized style in architecture; but it is in their groupings that they are most instinct with loveliness. The nearest, perhaps, we can

[1] There are, of course, some exceptions, one of the most notable being Chastleton House, which, finished in 1614, has never been altered or added to.

COURTYARD OF THE LITTLE HOUSE, BURFORD

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come to expressing their quality is to speak of a spirit about their angles and lines which is essentially English—something at once architectural and intimate, domestic and austere. Local needs, and local materials, and local individuality have worked, yet they have worked only within age-long, accepted tradition. It is not more than this perhaps that the religious strain in Cotswold building amounts to. But there is something ecclesiastical about it.

The house in which I write is partly Tudor. It is small, but it bears many traces of having been built for gently bred people. I have a feeling that in some way, and at some time, it must have been Religious. It is not in the least gay ; three out of four of its sitting-rooms look to the north ; but it is deep set in tranquillity. It certainly has spirits—not ghosts that come and go—but spirits that have not left it ; and under its rafters fragments and shreds of memory vitalize. The proprietors of *The Oxford Journal* have done a greater kindness than they, or I, realized in allowing me to bring their volumes under these roofs. Eyes that scanned these sheets when they were fresh

from the press have seemed to look over my shoulder until, one after another, the yellowed old papers have sprung into life. The past has quickened about me, and I have felt myself up against it with that poignancy of touch that has been first experienced, perhaps, in our generation—a kind of poignancy which has found its master of expression in Mr. De Morgan. Many of us will recall that picture, among the most moving in the whole of fiction, when Lavretsky, in Turgenev's *A House of Gentlefolk*, returns to find in Lisa's home a generation that has never heard of her tragedy. That, as we read, is death supreme ; the icy touch, cold on our hearts at midday. Human loveliness, high and rare passion, show here bleached, bared, accusing the Heavens. Art on Turgenev's level may not, of course, be dated or classified. None the less, this great passage may stand for the moment in contrast with the trend of Mr. De Morgan's writing. His readers must, in a measure, grieve after all that has flowered and faded from the lives of Old Jane and the sixteenth-century Duchessa ; but chiefly they are made conscious of how the aforetime vitalities, links in the great romantic

succession, fill out and encompass our present-day world. To me, the sense of permanence—of immortality—thus brought to contemporary doings appears the final flower of historical knowledge.

When, I wonder, will history be taught in our village schools from the local end, as surely it should be ? One day lately I was motored from the Roman Villa at Chedworth past Warren Hastings's house at Daylesford. Our road was by solitary uplands, and through hollows where little but cloud shadows moved, and our bourne was one of those houses that, on 24 April, 1795, threw open its doors and its cellars in ecstasy at the news of Hastings's acquittal—one of those lovely old manor-houses which seem to hold Stuart grace and distinction embalmed. I shall not forget the way in which that drive linked up the lands and the ages. At Chedworth the home-sickness for the Palatine Hill of that district commissioner and his wife, eighteen hundred years ago, came to us through the delicacies of their appointments in these barbarous wilds—their scraps of pottery and glass and exquisite pieces of pavement. How, I felt certain, that old Roman would have

rejoiced in the strength and speed of our motor ; and with what camaraderie he would have greeted the great master of Daylesford and sympathized in every detail of his arraignment and his defence. Yet to which of the children in the neighbouring villages has Warren Hastings's story, to say nothing of the Roman occupation of their district, any kind of reality ? Are any of them able to picture the conditions —the dress, the manners, the look of the houses and streets—on that morning when news of Hastings's acquittal reached Chipping Norton, when "the bells of the countryside rang unremittingly for the whole of the day," and Chastleton and Cornwell Manors opened their doors and their cellars to every man who cared to come into them from daylight to dark ? What do Chipping Norton children know of the excitement there was on 14 November, 1832, when the Duchess of Kent and Princess Victoria, on their journey half across England, were met outside Chipping Norton by a detachment of the first regiment of the Oxfordshire Yeomanry and escorted to Chapel House, to be received there by Captain Whitmore Jones and to stay for refresh-

ments ?[1] But the interest of this last occurrence, I can imagine some elementary schoolmaster objecting, is incidental and puerile ; it has no educational significance. Has it not ? I wonder. The time for railways was ripe : yet their coming was to fall on the nation at large as a bolt from the blue. Little did any of these august post-chaise travellers on that November day of 1832 perceive the changes in methods of transport that were to take place immediately ; still less could they dream of those their young charge was to witness. Queen Victoria was presently to see the high roads deserted, the iron horses everywhere triumphant. When she came to Charlbury by train in the 'eighties, and when, in 1900, she placed a wreath on the coffin of her oldest friend who was being brought there to be buried,[2] did she realize, I wonder, that Charlbury lay only a few miles from the Chapel House she had visited before her coronation ? If she did happen to think of it, what battalions of changes must have thronged through her memory. Even those two incidents, of 1832

[1] *The Oxford Journal*, 17 November, 1832.

[2] Jane, Baroness Churchill—" Jane " of Queen Victoria's *Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands.*

and 1900, might well serve for pegs on which to fasten in children's minds threads from the long years between them.

A further, a really thrilling, point to be commended to the mind of the small villager is that he has seen the whirligig of Time return traffic and bustle to our roads. To-day motor-cars hoot and motor-lorries rumble not only along highways, but through cross-country lanes. Strangers press up to the doors of our remotest old homes. At times one can almost see dismay cross the faces of the stately old houses at sight of the men and the manners that confront them. What solace is there then to offer, I find myself asking, to the stately old places and the old walled gardens such as that friend's garden in which some of these pages have been written—places that have kept their beauty and nobility unspoiled in face of the growing material ugliness of two and a half centuries? The lichened walls of this garden will glow at midsummer with scarlet wild poppies and magenta-coloured snapdragon; white peonies will stand in great blocks at its corners; crimson ramblers will tumble in the apple trees; and, beside the long grass walks, bands of mauve and purple

pansies will accompany soaring blue larkspurs and trumpeting orange-red lilies. If the owner who comes then in the evenings to sit by the sundial shall say, in the name of the lovely old house, that distinction and grace are slowly won things, and that an upstart world is destroying them; that they cannot, in fact, be preserved now political power is given to those who have them not, nor for a long time to come, can have them—what answer have we to offer? May we not ask the old house to have patience, tell it that any antagonism it sees, so far as it is a vulgar and ignorant antagonism, exists less than at any earlier period in our history, only that now it flaunts by in the daylight instead of being held down by force in noisome and cavernous places? Never before has the appreciation of natural beauty, and beauty of all kinds, been anything like so widespread as it is to-day. To many refined persons this truth is obscured by the oppressiveness of a public that makes orange-peel picnics. But these persons neglect the fact that the ideal our time is attempting to realize differs essentially from that of any earlier civilization. Allowing no slave or permanently submerged

class as the basis on which peculiar loveliness is to be reared, the modern conception—of bringing beauty to the many instead of the few—involves a temporary diminution in gracefulness. Yet even this diminution is more apparent than real. Vulgarity in the classes that have no tradition stares us in the face; while we are apt to be quite unaware of the coarseness of habits general in 1800 among persons of family. Endangered as the old house may think itself to-day by democratic feeling, it is really less in danger than at any previous time in its history. Bitter voices heard about the place now are as nothing compared with the bitterness that seethed dumbly out of sight of it a hundred years ago. England took no part in the convulsions of Europe in 1848, because Chartism found her dumb suffering a voice.

CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNING OF THE CENTURY

THE chief difficulty in the way of our understanding alterations that came about in English life in the 'thirties and 'forties of last century arises from the fact that we are unfamiliar with the circumstances that preceded them. How strange—how almost incredibly strange—do we find the conditions of life described in the opening chapters of *Clayhanger*, or in Disraeli's "Young England" novels; yet these descriptions are of scenes and events well on in the century, and not at its opening.

In any effort to picture English life in the year 1800 we shall do well to school our thoughts in the first place to an extraordinary degree of separation between neighbouring localities. This is so all-pervading a fact that I find it difficult to detach instances of it. Persons in one part of Oxfordshire wishing to rent houses in another part of the same county advertised for par-

ticulars of residences "where roads are good, provisions reasonable, and fuel cheap," with the proviso that all answers are to state "with rent, size, and situation of premises, the average price of fuel and provisions." At the close of the eighteenth century a clergyman writes at length to his brother in London of the excitement caused in a village near Cirencester by the appearance of a young man "dressed in a sort of livery," who had proved, upon the reverend gentleman's investigation, "instead of the strange figure I expected, to be a young naval officer in a full suit of regimentals. He told me he was a good deal mortified at being taken for a footboy or mountebank on account of his white sleeves, which made the country people who know nothing of uniforms suspicious of his character."[1] About the year 1806 the Fettiplace manor of Swinbrook, not two miles from the desk where I write, was inhabited by "Mr. Freeman of London," who, with a large staff of servants, entertained lavishly there. It was not till this district had for some time been terrorized by the increase of highway robbery on the London-Gloucester, London-

[1] *The Cumberland Letters.* Edited by Clementina Black.

Banbury, and London-Worcester roads that the popular and hospitable Mr. Freeman and three of his retainers were discovered to be highwaymen who had worked the Home Counties for years. And even when the discovery was made, it was made accidentally. Fifteen years later than this, at the time of Sir Robert Peel's organization of a metropolitan police force, well-known thieves and desperadoes ousted from London found themselves safe to pursue their old practices within a forty-mile distance. When we find a man charged with having six wives—three in Ireland, two in England, one in Scotland—we feel that, as far as chances of these ladies running against one another went, they might as well have been sixty! Until the middle of the century our grandfathers were able to stop a run upon a local bank by paying over its counter money they drew from a counter not a score of miles off. The conditions of banking itself provide emphatic evidence of the separation of different parts of England. Money circulated in such a small radius that almost anyone could start banking on the strength of local knowledge of his position. It could be said in Gloucestershire

at the end of the eighteenth century that "there is scarce a village without one, two, and sometimes three of these shops. But we may hope that this extreme rage for banking will work its own reformation; since a tooth-drawer of a village called Woodmancoat, in this county, has actually issued twopenny Bank Notes, which are now in brisk circulation through the County."[1]

If we could have set down for us the talk of that Christmas Day party at Chipping Campden, in 1816, when "fourteen persons dined together whose total ages amounted to one thousand and ninety-five years," how richly informed we should be! Then, as now, conversation between people whose ages averaged above seventy years would turn more on the past than the present. But that "present" would be amazing enough to our ears. If advertisements for servants were talked of, we should hear that "they must have had the smallpox"; that they should be able to dress wigs; and that maidservants invariably "must be provided with unexceptional characters of long duration." We should hear of advertisements for the lowest

[1] *The Gloucester Gazette*, 10 August, 1792.

tenders for "farming the poor"; and of such notices as the following: "To the Guardians of the Poor.—Wanted, several girls from twelve to sixteen years of age as apprentices in the cotton-spinning business. They must be brisk, healthy, and free from any constitutional disease, having had the smallpox and measles." If education were talked of, we should hear that the usual fee at a "ladies'" boarding-school at the beginning of the century was fourteen guineas a year, at a "gentlemen's" boarding-school ten guineas or twelve guineas. In the early years of the century the number of these schools increased very rapidly, and their proposals became much more enlightened; but as late as 1820 the list of *Extras* included "classics three guineas, French four guineas, use of the globes two guineas, tea one pound ten shillings, washing and mending two pounds eight shillings, single bed two guineas."[1]

[1] An interesting light is thrown upon the standards of middle-class education at this time by the statement of Robert Owen, the philanthropist, that as soon as he could read, write, and had mastered the first four rules of arithmetic—at the age of seven—his schoolmaster made him an usher, and though he stayed at the school till he was nine, his whole time from the age of seven till he was nine was given to teaching.

Uppermost perhaps in all the talk would have been the consideration of tickets, and parts of tickets, taken in the State lotteries. The number of these was immense, the first prize offered being usually £20,000, and the lowest a hundred or so prizes of £50 each. From records of the time such as those in *The Cumberland Letters* we find that people of all sorts and conditions were incessantly making enquiries as to these tickets. The Burford races, to which the Prince Regent often came down, and the great fair at Stow, would surely be spoken of. Neighbouring windmills would be to let; and enclosure notices would probably come under discussion. Several of those present would be certain to have relatives in prison for debt. A notorious local case of this time concerned an individual who had been imprisoned for twenty years for a debt of £20. Voices would be dropped to speak of sweeps' boys burned in chimneys, of resurrection men, and of coining going on almost everywhere.[1] Yet amid all the talk strange to us there would be some remark-

[1] Spurious coin and counterfeit bank-notes deluged the country. It has been calculated that there were at this time fifty fraudulent mints in London alone. *A History of Police in England*, by Capt. W. M. L. Lee, p. 199.

ably familiar. In turning over old newspapers one finds that a hundred years have made very little difference in the craze for patent medicines, and—more curiously—as little in the way of advertising them. Then, as now, the local cure was trumpeted by the advertiser. "Thomas Burson of Fullbrook near Burford who was for a long time sorely afflicted with the King's Evil" testifies to being cured; and numerous witnesses give weight to an advertisement for "Dipping in the Salt Water, that Infallible Remedy for the bite of a Mad Dog performed by Sarah King. S. King begs leave to observe to the Publick that she employs a Person to perform the operation who has been bred to the Practice from his Youth—if the Persons arrive at her house two days before the Full and Change of the Moon and four after, they may place the most implicit confidence in a Cure." Nor would our party break up without some echo of the general laughter of this time at the expense of "persons strutting about without any legs," that is, people wearing trousers instead of knee-breeches. Regret, too, was abroad at the increased use by ladies of rouge and white paint, attributed to the fact

that Pitt's hair-powder tax[1] and the high price of flour had brought dark tresses and, consequently, high colouring into vogue. Then amid all the talk, and hushing it to murmurs of admiration, local mummers would come in—King Alfred, King Alfred's Queen, King William, Old King Cole, Giant Blunderbore, Little Jack, Old Father Christmas, Saint George of England, the Old Dragon, the Merry Andrew, Old Doctor Bell, and the Morris men—to perform the local Miracle Play.[2]

It has been remarked that we are able to picture social life at the beginning of the nineteenth century almost as much by what Jane Austen leaves out as by what she puts into her books. It is impossible to think that she was not thoroughly familiar with the mental atmosphere of her characters, yet nothing is more striking than their insulation from what we regard to-day as fundamental interests and questionings. Her clergy are not at all concerned with religious problems or aspirations; her drawing-rooms and parlours do not seem

[1] 1795.

[2] See Appendix, p. 217, for the Oxfordshire Miracle Play taken down in 1853 from the lips of a man who had been acting in it since 1807.

to have any suspicion of unrealized ideals or unfulfilled duties. It goes without saying that it was outside Miss Austen's purpose to deal with problems—social or religious—as such; but it is notable that her characters live out their lives in an air in which questionings do not exist. A derelict condition of this kind, it may be urged, is that of narrower middle-class life in the country to-day. In some sense this is the fact. But, in the first place, Jane Austen was writing, on the whole, of gentry; and in the second place entrenchment in ignorance takes another form now. Here and there a parson of ludicrous complacency may still exist (happily such are uncommonly rare), but his complacency takes rather the form of conceit of himself as a match for all intellectual antagonists than unawareness that such persons exist. Bigotry, of the most unenlightened squireen or dealer or farmer, is due nowadays to over-consciousness of the forces that he thinks put him at bay. For good and for evil, a hundred years ago so much was accepted as being beyond the region of questioning. In *The Gloucester Gazette*, 5 April, 1796, we read: "As some workmen were digging for stone a

few weeks ago, on the side of the highway leading from Tetbury to Bath, about forty yards from the Turnpike House, and on the east side of a field belonging to Lord Ducie, called Berryls, they found the remains of a tree supposed to be oak, upwards of twenty feet long, lying in a direction nearly south-east, the biggest end being westwards. It is very probable that the tree must have lain there ever since the Deluge, as it was upwards of fifteen feet from the surface and under a stratum of rock several feet thick. An oyster shell was likewise found with it ; all which demonstrate that the earth and stones covering the same must have been in a very soft state, and that the direction of the mighty torrent was south-east."[1]

Much no doubt has to be allowed for changed fashions in expression. Sentiments of to-day may not be quite so different from those of 1800 as they appear at first sight. None the less, the attitudes of judges, and magistrates,

[1] Yet with the new century the science of geology was to come into being. Its originator was a native of the village of Churchill—Joseph Smith—who in 1801 issued a prospectus of his forthcoming work on The Natural Order of the Geological Strata of England and Wales.

and newspaper editors of a hundred years ago do seem very strange. A labourer, for instance, was sentenced to fourteen years' transportation for stealing a plank, by the owner of the plank.[1] The Editor of *The Gloucester Gazette* writes: "Is it not mysterious that gambling which has been known to bring calamity on the greatest and richest men should now become common among the common people themselves?" Piety and gentleness existed, we know; but, for the most part, these graces must have lived in the shade. Brutality flourished in the daylight. Public executions and whippings were everyday spectacles;[2] bull-baiting, dog-fighting, and duck-hunting—the last two during service time on Sundays—were usual. Reputable Londoners made it their Sunday-afternoon amusement to repair with their families to the old Bethlehem Hos-

[1] *A Shepherd's Life*, by W. H. Hudson, p. 244.

[2] Till 1868 executions always took place in public. At Oxford hangings we read in *The Oxford Journal* of children of the condemned men being present, and of the bodies being "a few hours later cut down and delivered at Christ Church Anatomy School for dissection." Readers of *The Fairchild Family* will remember that little Emily and Lucy and Henry are taken by their father to look at the body of a criminal that had been "hanging in chains for some years though not yet fallen to pieces"!

pital to watch the maniacs who were there chained naked to pillars. At this time some two hundred thousand persons usually gathered in tea-gardens about London every Sunday afternoon, and at the end of the day they were to be classified thus: "Sober, 50,000; In High Glee, 90,000; Drunkish, 30,000; Staggering Tipsy, 10,000; Muzzy, 15,000; Dead Drunk, 5,000." In every circle of life it was unusual for a party to disperse while one masculine member of it was sober. Gentlemen, returning from Stow Fair, not uncommonly were reported in the newspapers as having been found by the roadside robbed and murdered, and only later discovered to have been desperately drunk.[1] The newspapers every week contained advertisements for "eloping apprentices," and such unhappy persons as "Ann Pierce, aged twenty, servant of John Hathaway of Lower Swell, eloped in the night. All persons warned against housing her." The right of a master to administer severe corporal punishment to a servant—other than an apprentice—had been questioned a few years earlier, and the Lord

[1] "Sydney Smith, looking back on his early days, said, 'Even in the best society one-third of the gentlemen at least were always drunk.'" The Right Hon. G. W. E. Russell.

Chief Justice had delivered himself thus: "Every master of a family is, in some sort, the father of it; and how much soever he is bound to be compassionate and humane to those who serve him, yet I must add, and require your attention to it, that if ye have a servant who is habitually obstinate, ye not only have a right to correct him, but it is your bounden duty to do so, and severely too."[1] Complaint being lodged, about this same time, against a firm of stocking-makers for keeping an iron collar locked on an apprentice's neck day and night for a month, it appeared "that one Lewis Aris, apprenticed by the same parish, is in a like predicament; and several girls now are, or have lately been, so treated. On the collars is 'Belongs to the stocking manufactory, Lambeth.'"[2]

It has been my very good fortune to be allowed to search through the early nineteenth-century documents in a local solicitor's office. In doing this, nothing has impressed me more than the smugness of the old indictments. One, for instance, of 1812, concerns the theft

[1] *The Gloucester Gazette*, October, 1795.
[2] *Ibid.*, September, 1795.

of a sack of wheat (when wheat was 17s. a bushel) by a Westcot labourer with a wife and two children, who was earning 7s. a week. The man was left every night to lock up the barns. Upon a certain occasion a number of years before he had confessed to having stolen a quarter of wheat. This 1812 indictment sets out "by this man's own acknowledgement he has deviated from that path of Honesty and Rectitude which it is the bounden duty of every man to pursue. And it is of great importance that this affair should be treated as a Matter of serious nature since the property of Farmers is at various times so much in the power of their servants." That last sentence is notable, not only for the blindness it shows to an argument's power of cutting both ways, but because it gives us the real basis of the penal code of the time. "The penal laws were written in blood. Colquhoun[1] estimated that there were a hundred and sixty offences which were punishable by death, without benefit of clergy; a man could be hanged for larceny from the person if the value of the article stolen was more than a shilling. Townsend stated before

[1] *Treatise on the Functions and Duties of the Constable*, 1803.

the Parliamentary Commission of 1816 that he had known as many as forty people hanged in one day ; on one occasion seven persons, four men and three women, being convicted of being concerned in robbing a pedlar, they were all hanged in Kent Street opposite his door. In 1800 six women were publicly flogged till the blood ran down their backs for hedge-pulling."[1] In respect of the penal code indeed, matters were not very much altered twenty years later. Looking through the list of convictions of persons from our district at the Oxford Assizes of March, 1821, I find three men from Witney sentenced to death for stealing a sack of flour and some bacon ; and a maidservant, for taking grocery from a private house at Chipping Norton, is transported for fourteen years. In July, 1832, there is an account of a local trial which should, I think, be quoted verbatim. A certain William Freeman is indicted for stealing a lamb : " James Robey, the prosecutor, stated that the prisoner was employed by him as his shepherd ; that in crossing the road one morning, going to the fold, he (the witness) picked up the skin of a lamb ; he asked

[1] *A History of Police in England*, by Capt. W. M. L. Lee.

the prisoner whether he had missed one ; prisoner said, ' Yes, one, a very small one, died this morning, and I gave the carcass to a dog ' ; witness subsequently found on the premises of the prisoner's mother, where the prisoner resided, the carcass of a lamb, whole, with the exception of the liver, and ready for cooking. This was a lamb about the size to have fitted the skin found by the prosecutor. Other witnesses were called as to the lamb having been killed, or having died of disease ; and the prisoner, on being called upon for his defence, said that it was the custom for shepherds to have the carcasses of small lambs which had died, and that he did not know when he took the lamb that he was doing wrong. The learned judge, in summing up to the jury, found that the evidence was against the prisoner, and he was sentenced to transportation for life."[1] Another report, in the following year, reads thus : " At half-past six o'clock the Recorder took his seat on the Bench, when the following prisoners were placed at the bar to receive sentence. It is a melancholy fact to record that of the eight capital convicts not

[1] *The Oxford Journal*, July, 1832.

one of them had attained the age of twenty-four years, and two of them, Ward and White, are mere children. Sentenced to death : Joseph Bowley, for being at large before the period of the term for which he had been sentenced to be transported ; John Smith, by his own confession, for housebreaking and larceny ; Thomas Guest, for a like offence ; George Richardson, for a similar crime ; William Ward and Nicholas White, for housebreaking and larceny ; Job Cox, for secreting a letter entrusted to him in his capacity of a servant in the General Post Office."[1]

No effective organization for the prevention or detection of crime was in existence ; the sole idea for the protection of property seems to have lain in exemplary punishments. Voluntary " Associations for Prosecuting Felons," such as the one at Bourton-on-the-Water, which acted in the case of the theft of the lamb at Westcot, represented the only policing of the country districts.[2] Even in the English boroughs police reform was extraordinarily slow. Considerable towns, such as Gloucester,

[1] *The Oxford Journal*, May, 1833.

[2] By 1839 over five hundred of these Associations were in existence.

had no regularly instituted watchmen until 1822, and the power and utility of these men may be gauged from descriptions of them by persons now living.[1] That the "Charlies," as they were called, were little more than the butts of their districts may be seen also from numberless skits and lampoons of the time.[2]

As I turn over the documents of the Bourton-on-the-Water "Felons Society" its century-old briefs become very real, for I find neatly folded with each a bill for the lawyer's "supper and negus" on his way to and from the Assizes. In the world of these Assizes an extraordinary emphasis was laid upon crimes against property;[3] crime of other kinds, indeed, appears hardly to have been recognized. If we take, almost at random, the Summer Assize at Gloucester in 1818, we find the Bourton Felons Society prosecuting three labourers for barley stealing. All three men turned King's Evidence and accused each other. All of them are bewildered as to dates. The writ speaks of the

[1] See Mrs. Sarah Beesley's *Reminiscences of Banbury.*

[2] E.g. *The Morning Herald,* October 30, 1802.

[3] On 27 January, 1829, James Stile of Thame was transported for life for receiving stolen leather.

theft as taking place on "the Wednesday after New Christmas last"; the accused say "on a Tuesday or Wednesday night about New Christmas last." All plead guilty; all sign their confessions with a cross. The writ urges that "two of these men's accomplices were tried last Spring Assizes, and executed, for stealing a sheep." The men are said to have conveyed the barley to Fulbrook at three o'clock in the morning "from a barn in a hollow or delk about one mile from Rissington, adjacent to the unfrequented turnpike road leading from Stow-on-the-Wold to Burford"; one of them—Simms—is a "higlier" or "hallier." These three men were transported.

Transportation to Australia was then becoming common, though in regard to this district, and our countryside generally, the practice was not yet in full sway.[1] The first shipload of English convicts had been despatched to New South Wales in 1783. In *The Gloucester Gazette* for 1792 we read: "Another vessel is to sail in a few days, with

[1] Between 1825 and 1841, 48,712 convicts, male and female, were transported, an average of 2865 per annum. *The Progress of the Nation*, by G. R. Porter; new edition by F. W. Hirst.

convicts, for Botany Bay. The manner in which these people are transported requires some consideration from the Legislature. They are stowed together so close that sometimes near a third part perish in the course of the voyage. So much room is not even allowed them as was directed by the Regulating Bill for the Negroes, on their passage from West Africa to the West Indies; yet at least as much ought surely to be granted to wretches who have to pass the Equator, under the vertical rays of the sun." The editor of the paper goes on to draw attention to the following letter from a gentleman in civil employment at Botany Bay: "I suppose," this correspondent writes, "you are not unacquainted with the sufferings of the miserable creatures who were sent in the *Neptune* and two other ships. Out of the thousand convicts and more which were put on board in England, only three hundred are living. The captains cheated them of their cloathes which Lord Grenville allowed them, and when they were landed, they declared they had only one shirt and one thing of a sort given them when they were stripped of their long cloathes at Portsmouth, and that they wore

the same garments the whole voyage. Out of two hundred convicts, from those ships, put under the care of one surgeon, a hundred and seventy-six died."

It is almost impossible to learn anything of our national history between the years 1800 and 1850 without becoming conscious of the penal settlements of Australasia as a hell-black line upon England's horizon. Happily, however, no detailed description of the development of the system of transportation need come into this book. Enough, I think, is conveyed in one record only of an incident which took place as late as 1835. In 1834 there was a mutiny among the convicts of Norfolk Island. Early in 1835 the visiting Roman Catholic chaplain—afterwards Archbishop Ullathorne—brought, from Sydney, news to eleven of the mutineers that they were to be hanged: "It is," he writes, "a literal fact that each man who heard his reprieve wept bitterly, and that each man who heard of his condemnation to death went down on his knees, with dry eyes, and thanked God."[1] "Let me say," he continues, "that all the

[1] *The Autobiography of Archbishop Ullathorne*, p. 100.

criminals who are executed in New South Wales were imbued with the like feeling. Father McEnroe, in a letter to me which I quoted to Sir William Molesworth's Committee on Transportation, affirmed that he had attended seventy-four executions in the course of four years, and that the greater number of criminals had, on their way to the scaffold, thanked God." Personally, I have been devoutly thankful that I chanced on the writings of Father Ullathorne on my way through the records of eyewitnesses of convict life in Australia. The shining soul of this first Catholic chaplain of New South Wales makes bearable reading that otherwise hardly could have been bearable.[1] He describes the incident I have just given—the way in which the eleven men bore the news of their coming death—to bring to the minds of his readers the awfulness of the system England had established. With the greatest simplicity, with *naïveté* almost, he adds to his account of it: "I had a method of preparing men for their last moments by associating all that I wished them to think and feel with the prayer

[1] Cf. Appendix to *The Catholic Mission in Australasia*, by W. B. Ullathorne.

'Into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Lord Jesus, receive my soul.' I advised them when on the scaffold to think of nothing else and to say nothing else. As soon as these men mounted the scaffold, to my surprise, they all repeated the prayer I had taught them, aloud in a kind of chorus, together, till the rope stopped their voices." Perhaps only those who understand something of the peasant's terror of the unknown, and who have felt for themselves a desolation of home-sickness in a far-off land, can catch the tragic splendour of this scene—the molten glow of these men's vision, out of the impenetrable darkness of their lives beneath tropical sunshine, of the grave's blackness rifted with light. Another story of Father Ullathorne's, too, may hardly be read with dry eyes. He tells of a convict, thirty years of age, shepherding beyond the Blue Mountains, alone, except for shearing and lambing time, from the year's beginning to its end, rewarded for faithful service, every twelve months, by a fortnight's leave and five shillings with which he travelled on foot the hundred odd miles to Sydney, received the Sacraments, and walked up again to his wilderness. How, as this man

carried his memories of green English fields plumed with cloud shadows, through those arid plains to the dun-coloured mountains beyond, Purgatory must have seemed round him already![1] He was, Father Ullathorne tells us, a mystic, spending almost his whole days in prayer—devoted no doubt at first to his own kindred, but later, surely, if sanity was to be held through recurring anniversaries of English wild rose and hay time, swelling with the agony of his fellow-sufferers till spirits such as those of Ullathorne and his nuns were drawn to their help.[2] It seems almost incredible now that this transportation system should have lasted half through the century. It was only abolished, however, in 1852 at the clamorous demands of Aus-

[1] "You will leave the country, you will see your friends and relations no more; for though you will be transported for seven years only, it is not likely that at the expiration of that term you will find yourselves in a situation to return. You will be in a distant land at the expiration of your sentence. The friends with whom you are connected will be parted from you for ever in this world." Mr. Justice Alderson, to convicts in 1831. *The Village Labourer*, p. 295.

"It is a scandalous injustice that persons transported for seven years have no power of returning when that period is expired." *The Edinburgh Review*, 1819, Vol. XXXII, p. 45.

[2] I have reason to believe that this man had been sent from our district.

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tralia,[1] and on the day of its abolition nine thousand British subjects were at the hulks[2] waiting for transportation.

It has been noted already, in the case of Joseph Bowley, that the penalty for persons at large before the expiry of their term of transportation was death. All persons under sentence at the hulks were heavily ironed. Nevertheless some number made their escape; and, once beyond the confines of their prisons, that lack of intercourse between different parts of England which was the opening text of this chapter afforded them a real chance of retaining their freedom. *The Oxford Journal* for 4 May, 1833, contains a long article, "The Departure of Coster for Botany Bay," rejoicing over England's riddance of a native of Oxfordshire as to whom the authorities appear to have been

[1] "I was probably sitting in my room in Birmingham (in 1850) unconscious of what was passing in Sydney, when 100,000 met, under their leaders from all parts of the colony, to proclaim with one voice the convict system an abomination and a pollution of the land, and to utter the solemn resolve that never again would they allow a convict ship to touch their shores. Then arose three cheers for the old advocate of their new views!" *Autobiography of Archbishop Ullathorne*, p. 176.

[2] Large ships without masts moored near the Arsenal, Woolwich, and elsewhere, holding convicts chained together in gangs.

panic-stricken lest they should not succeed in actually shipping him off at the last. The tale of Coster's exploits, even those of them which came up at his final trial before the Lord Mayor of London, is long. He was certainly a daring rogue, and a most entertaining one. Reading his story we feel little doubt that wherever he went he would fall on his feet—that he was one of those who would be lucky even after transportation. The background of his early life is typical of much of the time. His father was a "religious sectarian," an Anabaptist in all probability. His elder brother had been murdered at Chalgrove; his sister had died in "St. Luke's Madhouse"; his other brother had emigrated. He had run away from the blighting tyranny of his father's creed to live by highway and bank robberies. So long, and so far successful, had he been in these that watching goods going in and out of his depository in Great St. Helen's had for years formed the excitement of that neighbourhood. Many men, and even children, under sentence of transportation were to die, to go mad, to experience horrors that may not be written. But Coster certainly would be among the few

fortunate ones in regard to whom the new country could not repeat the mistakes of the old. In Australia his virtues would be too valuable, his vices of too little account. Our final glimpse of him this side the world is his farewell speech to his lawyer : " When Laurie " (the Lord Mayor who tried him) " had me I did not like his prophetic words. He told me he'd catch me this time as sure as he was born ; and he's kept his word." Such a relation between the judge and the accused appears strange to our notions of what is judicial. It affords us an excellent example, however, not only of a certain sort of criminal's position at this time, but also of the contacts between individuals whose classes, as classes, were separated more widely than any ranks are among us to-day.

CHAPTER III

THE BEGINNING OF THE CENTURY
(CONTINUED)

ANYTHING like a general survey of economic conditions in the nineteenth century is as much outside my scope as it is outside my power. None the less I must remark that in no part of my reading of local newspapers and manuscripts do I find more astonishing signs of the distance men's minds have travelled between 1800 and 1900 than I do in matters of trading. The England of 1800 was one in which commerce, as we know it, did not exist. With the opening of the century, consequences of the great war were being felt in every direction; wheat was 115s. 11d. the quarter, and rioting was widespread. But the notable point is that all the riots were food riots pure and simple; the nation's resentment for its privations fixed not upon spendthrifts, politicians, or the arriving capitalist manufacturer, but upon "regrators," "forestallers," and

"engrossers."[1] The following notice is typical of many in our local newspapers about the year 1800. A butcher of Little Dean, in Gloucestershire, is indicted for regrating and forestalling. He had bought from a butcher in Monmouth Market 15 lb. of beef at 3d. per lb., and he had sold it to the prosecutor at $4\frac{1}{2}$d.; "the defence was that the man had purchased this meat for the use of his own family, but at the request of the prosecutor had spared it him after much urgent entreaty. The justices, however, would not listen to any extenuation, but sentenced him to pay a fine of £20 and to stand committed till the same was discharged. The justices presented the prosecutor with a guinea, and returned him their thanks for his conduct: which they hoped would at the same time stimulate others to be alike vigilant in bringing to justice all similar offenders, against whom that court were determined to inflict the most exemplary punishment." To our eyes the endeavour of these justices looks like the sand dyke a child builds against the incoming sea; yet at the beginning of the nineteenth century guineas were being plentifully subscribed

[1] Cf. *The History of England*, J. F. Bright.

in this way: the Judge in the case just quoted was the Lord Chief Justice Kenyon, and from his remarks here and elsewhere it is clear that he believed he and his agents could stem the new tendencies in trading.[1]

Again, if we turn to speeches in the House of Commons in 1806, and even in 1833, on behalf of the weavers of the Cotswolds, we find arguments, in defence of the domestic as opposed to the factory system, based upon Elizabethan statutes, such as the one forbidding any "manufacturer" to have on his premises more than three looms. Hand weaving held its own in the Cotswolds until 1835.[2] One reason for this was that eighteenth-century machine inventions had, at first, been applied only to the cotton trade. Spinning-jennies had indeed, by about 1770, ousted wheels, and thereupon

[1] According to the Act, not repealed till 1833, a regrator was one who bought goods to sell again within four miles, a forestaller was one who bought goods to sell in a market; an engrosser was one who bought standing corn, or other goods wholesale, to sell them at retail prices.

[2] "In the North, power has outstripped the hand-loom weaver in cottons, and in Gloucestershire the unequal race has just commenced in woollens." Parliamentary Papers, 1840, Vol. XXIV, 360.

spinning had almost entirely ceased in the cottages. Previous to this date spinning had been practised as a by-occupation in almost all our villages, and largely by women.[1] But as the jenny, compared with the wheel, was an elaborate machine, spinning then became a trade on its own account and the regular employment of a particular class of workers. Advertisements such as the following had begun to appear in our local newspapers: "Notice is hereby given to all Spinners of yarn, hemp and small flax, within twenty-five miles of the city of Oxford, that they may have employment from August next. Several hundreds may find employment."[2] The spinners were collected in wayside sheds wherever water power was available. These men, no doubt, earned more than they had done under the old conditions; but, as women and all house-bound persons ceased from this time to spin, the normal cottage budget was a good deal affected. The consequent distress had been considerable, and in many places relief had been given from the rates to those who could prove they had

[1] In almost all the villages and towns within reach of Witney the cottagers had spun wool for blankets.

[2] *The Oxford Journal*, 7 June, 1776.

completely lost their spinning wages. As destruction of the household spinning-wheels tended to help this proof, quantities of them were chopped to pieces or burnt. An old woman at Kingham well remembers her mother's account of a bonfire of such wheels.[1] In weaving, however, the position of things was altogether different. Inventions for spinning, from the jenny to the mule, had at once effected immense improvements in the quality of the yarn as well as in the speed of its production. Such advantages obtained to a comparatively small extent in weaving. As late as 1840 it was doubtful whether machines could ever be invented to weave fabrics of which small quantities only were required, such as Paisley shawls, or goods which were subject to changes of fashion; while the rates paid to hand weavers were so low that there was at that time hardly any saving in machine production. "The real issue lay deeper; it was not so much the competition of a machine with a hand implement, as a competition between two systems of industrial organization. The hand-loom

[1] The "Susan" of Mr. Warde Fowler's *Kingham Old and New*.

weaver was the last survival of cottage industry; he had been drawn into the capitalist system and had become a wage-earner, but he still enjoyed a measure of independence as to his hours of working and his habits of life. He clung to his liberty, and was most reluctant to seek other employment, even when his takings were reduced to a starvation point. But the practice of setting labourers to work in their cottages was not convenient to the capitalists . . . the employers preferred to have the men under their own eyes."[1] By 1806 many groups of weavers in our district had been collected into sheds and factories where water power was available. But many cottage weavers remained side by side with these primitive factories. I have written elsewhere of William Jones, the Charlbury weaver who lived and worked his loom up till 1830.[2] Jones's diary gives an excellent picture of that "domestic" industry which had been general in England in the eighteenth century. He measures land,

[1] *Growth of English Industry*, Cunningham, *Modern Times*, p. 791.

[2] The number of hand looms still in use in England and Scotland in 1830 was about 240,000. *Economy of Manufactures*, C. Babbage, 1832.

chops wood, takes pigs to market; but "a piece" is always on his loom, and he falls to it, in the evenings, or on wet days, as a woman does to her needlework. His weaving is too much a matter of course for him to describe it directly; but his diary is full of such jottings as "went to Enstone to carry a piece of cloth home," "finished Hutt's piece and carried it to Finstock," "finished Allen's piece," "mend'd the spinning wheel."

The long struggle for and against the Factory Acts has preserved for us, in House of Commons Reports, many details of the earliest factories that must otherwise have perished. But in this matter, as presently in the case of Common Land enclosures, we need to realize that, though the new system undoubtedly aggravated certain evils, many brought to light by the controversy it raised had been in existence under earlier conditions. We certainly find a champion of the domestic weavers of the Cotswolds asking the House of Commons of 1806, "Would it have occurred to a man in common life, unused to the factory system, to be necessary to have restraints from working children almost day and night, from having two or three sets in

factories that when one gets out of a hot and tainted bed the other should immediately go into the same ? " But the edge of such declamation is a little blunted when we find the very same weavers (of Gloucestershire), in 1832, advancing the class of argument they did advance against the Child Labour Bill then before Parliament. That Bill enacted that under nine years of age no one should work in the woollen or cotton trades; under thirteen years of age hours were limited to nine a day; under eighteen years to twelve; and night-work was prohibited. The Cotswold weavers argued against these provisions that no limits of age or hours existed for agricultural labourers, sailors, colliers, miners, glass workers, smelting houses, potteries, and hardware factories. If the hours of children's labour are to be curtailed, they say, " Young people would be on the streets a prey to vice and idleness." " Is the child," they ask, " to be kept at school till nine years of age, and, if so, who is to pay for it ? " " Parents," they continue, " have lately had their common fund reduced by the subtraction of their children's labour, which Providence had before kindly given them almost as the equivalent for

the great care and burden of a large family." Finally, the manifesto goes on to argue, in respect to a clause in the Bill forbidding the presence of minors in the factories between 7 p.m. and 8 a.m., that it is ludicrous to suppose employers shall submit to keeping Time Books to be produced against themselves; it is "equally inconceivable that they shall ever be obliged to prove that a worker has not been employed contrary to the Act."[1] A study of the evidence given before Peel's Committee in 1802 leaves us with no reason to doubt the statement of one of the chief witnesses—Mr. Kinder Wood, the surgeon—as to the suffering children had experienced in the cellars and cottages of hand-loom weavers. This, of course, was very much worse in London and the towns of the north than it ever had been in the country. Yet, even to country weavers, workhouse children had been long sent as "apprentices." What the lives of these infants must have been, at a time when the weaver's own children of six and seven years old commonly worked twelve and fourteen hours a day, is not difficult

[1] From a pamphlet in the collection of Mr. Francis Hyett, of Painswick House, to whom I am indebted for the sight of it.

to imagine.[1] Eighteenth-century newspapers are blackened with stories of ill-treatment of pauper apprentices. Weavers offer "cards" to anyone who will bring back their "eloped" children. Constantly, too, advertisements appear for runaway chimney-sweep boys. For some reason, largely I think from the place the *Water Babies* story has in our lives, the most real of such sufferers, to our modern imaginations, are the chimney-sweep boys. Details of the horrors they underwent may be learned from the evidence before a Parliamentary Committee of 1816.[2] Spite of these revelations, however, the Bill drafted then was thrown out; *The Edinburgh Review* found itself able to say: "We must own that it was quite right to throw out the Bill for prohibiting the sweeping of chimneys by boys—because humanity is a modern invention; and there are many chimneys in old houses that cannot possibly be swept in any other manner";[3] the newspapers continued to

[1] Defoe and other eighteenth-century writers had rejoiced at there being in the weaving districts of England and Scotland "scarce anything of five years old," but could and did earn its own living. *A History of Factory Legislation.* Hutchins and Harrison.

[2] *Report from the Committee on Employment of Boys in Sweeping of Chimnies. Reports,* 1817, VI, 171.

[3] *The Edinburgh Review,* 1819, XXXII, 320.

contain ghastly stories of boys suffocated and burned: and there was no effective legislation on the subject till 1834. In view of this long delay, it is all the more pleasant to read, in February, 1829:[1] "With the view of promoting and establishing the practice of sweeping chimneys by machinery in Charlbury and the neighbourhood, a machine has been procured by subscription, and put in the hands of a mason, who used it very successfully in one hundred instances in a very short time. This information is published with the intention of exciting more general attention to the subject in the County of Oxford." It is quite clear that light esteem of child life was not invented by the Industrial Revolution.[2] Without doubt the sufferings of children in the poorest class grew unavoidably with their parents' ever-increasing struggle for existence between the years 1770 and 1850. But, if we go back before this particular struggle began, it is unquestionable that we find ourselves confronted with an attitude towards helplessness and suffering that is shocking to our eyes. We know that

[1] *The Oxford Journal.*

[2] "Little boys for small flues," was a phrase common in sweeps' advertisements at this time.

harshness and inhumanity are to be found in England to-day. Yet there is no better tonic with which to hearten ourselves for present endeavour than realization of the extraordinary changes our fathers and our grandfathers effected. For a general impression (and more than a general impression is hardly endurable) of the attitude of the State and the public generally towards children of the poor in the early nineteenth century, we have only to turn to the opening chapters of Mr. Bennett's *Clayhanger*.[1]

Yet, spite of the harshness and roughness that were normal at the time, the fact remains that, for many years after the general institution of factories, country parents were most

[1] In passing, I should like to note two considerations in respect to these chapters. Firstly, talk of certain movements, such as the Sunday-school movement, and the temperance movement, fell very boringly and flat on the ears of our childhood. That was not altogether our fault; they were often presented by trite and obvious minds. But it was due partly to the fact that we had been born too late to feel the real passion that had given rise to those movements, and too early to view them historically. Mr. Bennett has succeeded where we have failed. The presence of the Sunday-school and the Sunday-school teacher in *Clayhanger* are Christ-like, and that is because Mr. Bennett, unlike the rest of us, has a real knowledge of the gehennas into which they came. It is on this knowledge that Mr. Bennett has constructed his Five Towns of to-day.

strongly prejudiced against allowing their children to enter them. One reason for this was that the early mills were often set up in lonely places, wherever running water was available, and this remoteness was felt to put too much power into the hands of masters who were commonly not men of education, but of the same class as the operatives themselves. Another reason was that factory owners had turned early to parish overseers and obtained a supply of workhouse children, and children of persons receiving outdoor relief, whom they could bring to live (if living it could be called) on the factory premises.[1] Mill owners established regular communication with overseers of the poor in country districts, and demand and supply increased very rapidly ; days were arranged for inspection of workhouse inmates, one idiot was included with twenty children, and a regular slave trade was instituted. The condition of the pauper " apprentices " in the factories at the beginning of the century beggars description. Those who wish to know what it was have only to read the *Memoir of Robert*

[1] In the autumn of 1791 *The Oxford Journal* had begun to comment on the van loads of pauper children going through Oxford on their way to the factories of the north.

Blincoe (Blincoe was an apprentice from St. Pancras Workhouse) or the Report of the Parliamentary Committee of 1802. The state of things this Committee revealed was so appalling that Sir Robert Peel's Act of that year for the protection of pauper children in the factories was passed with little opposition.[1] It is clear from Blincoe that in many, if not in most, factories this Bill was practically a dead letter. But the point with which we are concerned at the moment is that it applied to "apprentices" only, and by this fact it increased immensely mill owners' efforts to procure the labour of "free" children. That they were successful in these efforts was due largely to the migration to the towns from the Cotswolds and the West of England in the 'twenties and 'thirties. Desperate miseries had by that time been overtaking the Cotswold weavers. The worst of them all perhaps, and we have this fact from the parish overseers, was "the most grievous, the most degrading, and the most ruinous manner in which their wages are paid on the truck system."[2] The picture of this

[1] The first Factory Act—*An Act for the Preservation of the Health and Morals of Apprentices employed in Cotton and other Mills.* 1802.

[2] Parliamentary Papers, 1840, Vol. XXIV, p. 461 and following pages.

system given us in Disraeli's *Coningsby* is surely heartrending enough, but it pales beside the testimony of witnesses from the Stroud valley district. They show us the starving, half-desperate weavers squeezing out time and pence to convey cartfuls of half-rotten perishable goods, which have been forced on them in place of wages, to some fairly generous shoemaker, coal dealer, or druggist at a distance. Bread that is brought in this way, exactly as it was sold at the Truck shop, Stroud magistrates pronounce unfit for a dog to eat.[1] One witness before the Commissioners, a Stroud valley tradesman, says: "My servant's father works for a manufacturer, who is a truckster; he never receives one farthing in wages—he is obliged, want it or not, to take just what his master's shop produces, and that to the full amount. His master is not the only landlord in the neighbourhood; hence the man has to provide his rent. His master is not a tailor, a shoemaker, or apothecary, so some money is needed for these purposes. To supply these wants, after having given his master whatever he chooses to charge for his bacon, cheese, etc.,

[1] Parliamentary Papers, 1840, Vol. XXIV, p. 463.

he is obliged to send to Birmingham to a relative there to dispose of for him at the best price he can."[1]

In 1795, under fear of an English Revolution, the Seditious Meetings Bill, forbidding any gathering of fifty or more persons without permission from a magistrate, had been passed. In 1799 and 1800 the Combination Acts had followed, making trade combinations of any sort illegal. On 27 May, 1809, we read in *The Oxford Journal:* "Thursday last Peter Burton, a journeyman shoemaker, was convicted before the magistrates of this city under the statute passed in the 39th year of the present king, for preventing unlawful combinations of workmen, of decoying, persuading and soliciting John Savage, a journeyman shoemaker, to leave the employment of his master for the purpose of

[1] Parliamentary Papers, 1840, Vol. XXIV, p. 460.

It is interesting to note that a struggle over Truck payment had been taking place in our gloving villages. We read in *The Oxford Journal*, 11 December, 1830: "On Monday last George Dewsnap of New Woodstock, glover, was convicted in the penalty of £10 for paying Jane Clark for her work, as a gloveress, with goods instead of money. Next day James Hedges of Old Woodstock, glover, was fined £10 and costs for the same offence towards Anne Stratford. The effigies of some of the master glovers who have practised the truck system, were exhibited about the town and afterwards burned by the mob in front of their dwellings."

obtaining an advance of wages." In 1824, with the Acts against Workmen's Emigration, the Combination laws were repealed. The years of suppression bore their immediate and inevitable result. Strikes broke out in many directions, and among them was the strike of weavers in the Stroud valley (28 April, 1825), "when in about forty-eight hours nearly all the shuttles were laid in the silent grave."[1] Since 1802 the case of the Cotswold cottage weavers had been growing steadily worse; the truck system has already been spoken of; wages had been greatly reduced; "many of the weavers were compelled to take their looms to the factory and pay a shameful rent for the standing of their own looms, so they had rent at home and rent to pay to the master; and many an industrious man has been brought to the parish by this conduct";[2] and in the panic and bank failures of 1825 something like half the local manufacturers had become bankrupt. This strike of 1825, though the membership of the Stroud Valley Weavers Union had increased from 400 to 5000 in a few days, and an eyewitness could declare "a quieter stand for wages I

[1] Parliamentary Papers, 1840, Vol. XXIV, p. 457. [2] *Ibid.*

never beheld before or since," accomplished little or nothing. In spite of this fact, the cottage weavers refused to take part in the illegalities and violences which in 1829 and 1830 were neighbouring them closely. "The weavers," writes Timothy Exell, Chairman of the Delegates of Weavers to Her Majesty's Commissioners, "seeing, in 1828, nothing but destruction before them, banded themselves into a *secret society*, to save themselves from utter ruin, but they soon found that this society was contrary to the laws of this country, and they quietly disbanded themselves, and in a few days the manufacturers reduced their wages 10 per cent again, which was nearly £30,000 a year more. This took place in 1829, and, adding to all this, many of the manufacturers had lengthened out their warping bars far beyond the standard of justice, and they, the weavers, had many thousands of yards of cloth to weave in a year for nothing; but, notwithstanding all this, when incendiarism raged in the country round them, the manufacturers fled to the weavers to protect their property, which they came forward to do, knowing that the destruction of property is

the high road to ruin."[1] That, it may perhaps be objected, is the weavers' account of affairs. But if we turn to the previous page of the Commission's Report we find these words from a landowner of the district: "The weavers' condition has been getting worse and worse. . . . Some of the shopkeepers were severe sufferers by the strike;[2] they gave the weavers credit on the faith that success would attend their efforts, and if so the truck system would be abolished. The foundation cause of the loss of trade in Gloucestershire lies in the coal-pits of Yorkshire, where coal is only half the price, beside the great advantage of being able to say for certain when an order could be executed. This was not the case with the water-mills of this county. In the summer months the supply was uncertain, not enough to employ the people in the mills above five or six hours in the day. . . . This state of things gradually led to the erection of steam-engines; but by the time these changes had taken place, the capital of our leading clothiers was nearly exhausted. . . . It has often been a matter of astonishment to me that the workpeople have

[1] Parliamentary Papers, 1840, Vol. XXIV, p. 457.
[2] Of 1825.

submitted so quietly to their fate. One cause is that their spirit was completely broken by their failure in 1825; another is that they are scattered in valleys and villages. By not coming in contact as often as they do in manufacturing towns, their manners are more simple and less turbulent. . . Something like a rupture is only delayed by the weavers' hope that the present Hand-loom Commission will turn out to their advantage. They fancy that their young Queen has sent you among them to enquire into their sufferings in order that they may be redressed."[1]

The whole Report of this Commission of Enquiry into the condition of hand-loom weavers, published in 1840, makes sorry reading. It is a curious commentary too on that Report of the Committee on the Woollen Trade which had declared in 1806, in reply to the hand-weavers' fears: "Your Committee have the satisfaction of seeing that the apprehensions entertained of factories are not only vicious in principle, but are practically erroneous. . . . Nor would it be difficult to prove that the factories, to a certain extent at least, seem

[1] Samuel Sevill, Esq., 4 February, 1839, to one of Her Majesty's Commissioners. Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XXIV, pp. 455 and 456.

absolutely necessary to the domestic system. . . . The domestic and the factory systems instead of rivalling, are mutual aids to each other ; each supplying the other's defects."

The chief result of the 1839 Enquiry, in the Cotswolds at any rate, was an outcrop of the growingly fashionable schemes for assisted emigration.[1] The whole subject of the country labourers' emigration is one on which I had better at once confess myself prejudiced. Its development seems to me to have depended from the first upon the credulousness of simple people. In the spring of 1832 "parochial paupers" of Oxfordshire were being "aided" to America. The hearts of some number of these emigrants appear to have failed, and they are discovered to have proceeded on their journey only so far as Bristol or Liverpool. Subscribers are being warned not to entrust their aid except to a "packet-master," who will "guarantee to see the party in."[2] In April, 1836, "*The Arab* of Liverpool is arrived at Gravesend with nine English labourers, who

[1] "Many of the cottage weavers were small farmers and emigration offered the best hope of relieving them." *The Lancashire Cotton Industry*, S. J. Chapman, 45.

[2] *The Oxford Journal*, 26 May, 1832.

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emigrated from the north of England as substitutes for the emancipated negroes, but found themselves totally unable to stand a tropical sun. Twenty-two other labourers went with them to Jamaica, of whom nineteen are dead of the fever, and the remaining three are left in hospital in the city of Kingston."[1]

But whatever the facts of the emigration movement in general may be, no lover of the Cotswolds will grudge the indulgence of a little sentiment over this incident in it. Pride in everything belonging to wool and the English wool trade had been the root of life and art in the Cotswolds. In 1503 the wealth of Middlesex, including London, had been only twice that of the next richest county, Oxfordshire. Throughout the centuries, whenever woollen manufacture in any form had been threatened special legislation had hastened to cosset it. Whenever a Jones at Chastleton had dared to be buried in linen, an informer had hastened to a Penyston at Cornwell; whenever a Penyston indulged in a similar luxury, the informing process had been reversed; and in each case the fine had been docilely paid. Till the end

[1] *The Oxford Journal*, 30 April, 1836.

of the eighteenth century no liberties could be taken with the premier industry of England. Now the nineteenth century had come and England's only reply to the Cotswold weavers' simple-hearted trust in their sovereign was an emigration outfit at £1 10s. 8¾d. a head, "including a Bible and Prayer Book."[1]

[1] Parliamentary Papers, 1840, XXIV, p. 527.

CHAPTER IV

NINETEENTH-CENTURY ENCLOSURES

THROUGH the latter half of the eighteenth century the enclosing of common and waste lands had been transforming the appearance of our country. Throughout England, from 1760 to 1843, the change was taking place; but we have it on Arthur Young's authority that it was more noticeable in Oxfordshire than anywhere else. He tells us that in the forty years preceding his *Report* of 1807, during which he had known the county, 12,559 acres of its waste lands had been enclosed.[1] And for twenty years onwards from the time of this *Report* notices of applications for Parliamentary authority to enclose open lands are plentiful enough in *The Oxford Journal*.[2] It is clear too that, whatever may have been his

[1] *Report of the Agriculture of Oxfordshire*, by Arthur Young: London, 1809. Prepared for the "Board of Agriculture." See Appendix, p. 225.

[2] Eighty Enclosure Bills a year was the average from 1800 to 1820.

desires, the peasant could have exerted little influence upon the movement; for commonly appended to these newspaper notices is the phrase: "All objections and petitions must be in writing." Yet it is easy, in regard to the district I write of, at any rate, to overestimate the labourers' objection to enclosing. Such an instance as that of Otmoor is very apt to mislead those who do not know the local intricacies and influences that were at work. Even such enquirers as Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Hammond seem to have gone a little astray in that particular. It is the widely accepted local belief that the Otmoor riots were fomented by Lord Abingdon; enquirers should be warned, at any rate, by the number of farmers whose names in this case appeared with those of the rioters. Several of my informants, and among them a most intelligent and trustworthy person, Mr. William Mann, market-gardener of Charlbury, can remember seeing the Oxfordshire Yeomanry called out to quell the Otmoor disturbances, with all the comment and information current at the time. There are, as a matter of fact, singularly few Oxfordshire examples of vigorous opposition to the enclosing movement. One

old woman at Kingham did indeed tell me how the dispossessed commoners of that village clubbed together and went to a Chipping Norton lawyer, how "they went, and they went" without any result. But the chief impression her story made on my mind was of the astuteness of the legal gentleman concerned! It is clear that in this part of the country the nineteenth-century enclosures took place very quietly. A few mentions of objectors are scattered up and down *The Oxford Journal*, but they are few, though one among them is certainly remarkable—the suicide of a farmer at Kennington being attributed to his mental distress at enclosing in his neighbourhood. Local testimony, moreover, bears out exactly the impression I had gleaned from newspapers and other records. For one thing it always is difficult for the weekly-wage earner to look far ahead, and enclosures afforded an immense amount of immediate labour in dry-walling and fencing. Mr. Mann, who has a perfectly clear remembrance of the enclosing of Ramsden Heath, asserts that there was no widespread resentment in regard to it. "The persons," he says, "who felt most

aggrieved at the Heath being made private property were the squatters. Some had enclosed portions near the public road between Ramsden and Witney. These persons were all deprived of their holdings. The land, at enclosure, was divided amongst all who owned property in the village ; and their new portions were according to their aforetime possessions." " I remember," Mr. Mann goes on to say, " the Ramsden blacksmith, who owned his house and a few acres, saying to my father, ' Because I have got this place ' (pointing to his cottage) ' they have given me that piece of land.' He laughed over it as a quaint joke that the man who was already provided with a piece of land should on that account be given another piece. Some owners of property near the Heath had as much as ten or twelve acres given them ; but those who had no legal title got nothing ; except a very few persons who were allowed to rent small pieces at 2s. 3d. per chain—the full market value."

The peasant of our uplands has a real faculty for putting his finger on the inconsistencies of his superiors.[1] The Ramsden blacksmith's enjoy-

[1] Cf. pp. 171–2.

ment was less naive than appears ; it was not mere cavil at the agelong principle of " To him that hath," its reference was to particular circumstances of the particular case. Almost everything in regard to Enclosure Awards depended upon the individual Commissioners. It was well within their power to apply parts of the open lands, under enclosure, to the use of the landless. Sometimes this was done. But only too often the Commissioners depressed below the pauper level a whole class that had been above it. They ousted the squatter, whose right of tenure had been very largely allowed ; they often substituted such minute pieces of land for the cottager's previous rights of pasturage and fuel that the strips were not worth retaining, and were sold or exchanged for potatoes, or even for beer. Mention of this last form of exchange affords good opportunity for a word of warning. In one of our towns a tradition long has been current that common rights were " exchanged for beer." What lurid pictures of innocent villagers enticed by the landowners to barmecide feasts, and there induced to set drunken crosses to deeds abjuring their communal rights, the phrase may be made

to call up! I have indeed come across persons who understood the tradition much in this way. What in reality happened was that Sarah Hind or Matthew Hatt, finding half a chain of land, which he or she had no means of fencing, cast on their hands, betook themselves to the nearest beershop and ran up a score.

That the Enclosure Acts in many places were very unfairly administered is in no need of proof. From 1790 onwards we find adherents of the system obliged constantly to explain that the increased number of paupers is due to the administration—chiefly the general absorbing of small farms into large ones[1]—and not to the principle of Enclosure. Arthur Young, for instance, was an absolutely honest man; yet in this Oxfordshire *Report* of 1809 he could write warmly as ever of the system of Enclosure, spite of his indictment of the Commissioners' methods published eight years before. It is necessary to be on our guard against easy generalizations in regard to this matter. We should at least have the fairness

[1] "It is computed," writes, in 1817, the author of *A Plan for Relieving the Rates by Cottage Acres*, "that since the year 1760 there have been upwards of forty thousand small farms monopolized and consolidated into large ones."

to read of the way in which generous and good landowners looked to the Enclosure Acts as remedying the evils we are apt to think that those Acts brought into being. As an instance of this, the *Annals of Agriculture* (Vol. XXVI, 1796) contain an extremely interesting contribution from the Earl of Winchilsea in respect to the Enclosure Bill then before Parliament. This same volume of the *Annals* contains the full text of this Bill; its many attempts to obviate abuses are very noticeable. In Lord Winchelsea's article, *The Advantages of Cottagers Renting Land,* he speaks of nine out of ten of the Commons being admittedly overstocked, and the summer keep on them very bad, and goes on to say, "It is certain, that upon an enclosure, if the owners choose it, the labourers who keep cows may be placed in a much better situation than they were, inasmuch as enclosed land is more valuable to occupiers of every description. Garden ground may also be allotted to them and others, which cannot be done while the land remains unenclosed. . . . Some difficulties may occur in establishing the custom of labourers keeping cows in those parts of the country where no

such custom has existed; wherever it has or does exist, it ought by all means to be encouraged, and not suffered to fall into disuse, as has been the case to a great degree in the Midland counties, one of the causes of which I apprehend to be the dislike the generality of the farmers have to seeing the labourer rent any land. Perhaps one of their reasons for disliking this is, that the land if not occupied by the labourers, would fall to their own share; another I am afraid is that they wish to have the labourers more dependent on them, for which reason they are always desirous of hiring the house and land occupied by the labourer under pretence, that by this means the landlord will be secure of his rent and that they will keep the house in repair. This the agents of estates are too apt to give in to, as they find it much less trouble to meet six than sixty tenants at the rent day, and by this means avoid the being sometimes obliged to hear the wants and complaints of the poor; all parties, therefore, join in persuading the landlord, who, it is natural to suppose (unless he has time and inclination to investigate the matter very closely), will agree to this their plan, from the manner in

which it comes recommended to him; and it is in this manner that the labourers have been dispossessed of their cow-pastures in various parts of the Midland counties. The moment the farmer obtains his wish, he takes every particle of the land to himself, and relets the house to the labourer, who by this means is rendered miserable, the poor's rate increased, the value of the estate to the landowner diminished, and the house suffered to go to decay, which, when once fallen, the tenant will never rebuild. Whoever travels through the Midland counties, and will take the trouble of enquiring, will generally receive for answer, that formerly there were a great many cottagers who kept cows, but that the land is now thrown to the farmers. It is to be hoped that as the quantity of land required for gardens is very small it will not excite the jealousy of the farmers."[1]

It is unjustifiable to speak of the labourer as "content" before the Acts of Enclosure.

[1] "War was waged against the cottagers in the eighteenth century, even where no enclosures were planned. They were a thorn in the side of the large farmers and even a burden to the estate agents." *History of the English Agricultural Labourer.* Hasbach.

There is always a danger of "telescoping" the past; of attributing to one cause the results of many. The Enclosure movement had very various impulses behind it. We need not take Cobbett as our authority to learn that the jobber and the land speculator were busy; the outcry comes from the landowners themselves. Secondly, the industrial revolution had come; business men and business methods were abroad in the country. To the experiments of enterprising agriculturists, like Loudoun in Oxfordshire and Coke of Norfolk, were added the business instincts of the great manufacturers, who, turning their wealth into large country estates, applied to rural conditions their demand for efficient production. Thirdly, the high prices of the period of the Napoleonic wars, combined with the disappearance of the small squire,[1] had placed the large farmer in a position of overbearing power and influence. Most

[1] "The smaller gentry were among the first to fall victims to these forces; and for two chief reasons. First, they liked to imitate the luxurious habits of the richer members of their class, and their incomes were not sufficient to enable them to do so. Secondly, they were in many cases possessed of neither the intelligence nor the capital necessary to enable them to adopt the new methods of husbandry. The increasing burden of taxation made their struggle for existence still

of us in the country to-day would much rather fall into the hand of the landowner than into that of the farmer. A hundred years ago there was even more reason for the feeling. "While farmers were selling their corn at 112s., or even at 170s., the quarter—while it paid to take in bits of open down land, get three crops off it without manuring, and then pass on to the next piece—the wretched labourers were told that prices were so high that but little could be given them for their wages. . . . The wages were so low that they could not live on them, and they were forced to come upon the parish; and the old Poor Law, in the hands of the farmer guardians, enabled those very employers who kept the wages low to levy a rate upon their parishes to support those people whom they were starving."[1] Amid the welter of new circumstances affecting the countryside at this time it may be easy, but

harder. With the exception of the few who succeeded in making their way into the upper ranks of the squirearchy, they became clergymen, attorneys, shopkeepers, large farmers, army officers or civil servants, or found in the East Indies the wealth they could not find at home; and their estates were bought by manufacturers, merchants, artisans, lawyers and farmers." Hasbach, p. 104.

[1] *The History of England*, by J. F. Bright.

it is not fair, to lose sight of the genuine idealism prompting a portion, at any rate—and that no insignificant portion—of those who advocated Enclosure. A study of *The Annals of Agriculture* and of the Reports of the Board of Agriculture, for the early years of the century, puts beyond question the fact that before the common-land enclosures the landlessness of the labourer was a deplored and generally existing condition. Most notable and interesting of the publications upon this subject is Arthur Young's *Inquiry into the Propriety of Applying Wastes to the Better Maintenance and Support of the Poor: With Instances of the Great Effects which have attended their Acquisition of Property in Keeping them from the Parish even in the Present Scarcity.*[1] Published in 1801, the article is a strong indictment of many Enclosure Commissioners' methods; yet it explicitly declares "no one is to imagine that one word offered in this paper is meant generally against enclosing," and Young continued for the rest of his life to be an adherent

[1] I have given this *Inquiry* in full in my appendix, page 225, because, though its details are not taken from this district, it is a perfect mine of information as to wages, rents, and food prices at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

of the system of enclosure. His Oxfordshire *Report* of eight years later (1809), too, clearly states his belief that more good than harm had resulted from enclosures in Oxfordshire, and that the poor had not suffered from them. A sentence from Dr. Warde Fowler's just-published history of a village in this district seems to me to sum up the facts. "The mischief is not," he writes, "to be ascribed so much to enclosures, against which an outcry is vain, as to the neglect of the opportunity arising on every enclosing movement, to take the true interest of the agricultural labourer into consideration, and to redeem him from the semi-serfdom to which he was in danger of reverting." Dr. Warde Fowler goes on to remark that he never heard any complaint as to the Kingham enclosure from the villagers, though he settled among them within twenty years of the Award, and has talked with them much from the first.[1]

[1] This chapter was written before the publication of *Kingham Old and New*. Mr. Fowler, however, his own book then being in the press, was kind enough to read it in manuscript. I was, of course, much gratified at that time that his authority could accept and approve it. How ripe and informed that authority is everyone interested in rural England is privileged now to judge for himself.

CHAPTER V

ROADS AND ROAD TRAVELLING

AS we travel to-day without let or hindrance through the open country and up and down the roadways of our villages and towns, the difference between this freedom and the restrictions of less than half a century ago is almost forgotten. Middle-aged men and women talk of Turnpikes and Turnpike Trusts; but the conditions these terms imply have dropped deep out of mind.

Fifty years ago if you essayed to drive or ride from your home you were confronted almost immediately by a gate barring the road. Almost always it was shut, and you had to wait the advent of the gatekeeper or pikeman; but if it stood wide open, you dare not pass through it. The further side was forbidden you by the law of the land till you had paid for entering upon it. What you had to pay depended on whether your vehicle had four wheels or two, whether you drove one horse or more,

the measurements of your wheels, and various other considerations. A gatekeeper, when in doubt, demanded all that he dared. A few miles beyond the first gate, occasionally only a few hundred yards, another gateman and another scale of charges confronted you. If you took a pig or a sheep through a gate for one purpose you must pay ; if for another, you were exempt. You might drive through the gate upon Sunday if you were going to preach somewhere ; but if, by any mischance, you should not preach after all, you were liable to prosecution. If you returned before twelve midnight through a gate you had passed that same day, you returned free ; if you were a second after midnight, you paid toll again. Endless disputes took place at the turnpikes. For instance, suppose you reached the locked gate five minutes before midnight and it took you six minutes to rouse the gatekeeper (gatekeepers slept proverbially heavily just at that hour), what was to be done ? The law said you were to be charged according to your time of reaching the gate, without reference to the time of the gatekeeper's appearance. But suppose the gatekeeper declared he had not been to sleep,

and that you had but this moment arrived? Or suppose you, on your part, thundered upon the gate at five minutes past twelve and declared you had been there half an hour. What then? Eyewitnesses of all these occurrences have described them to me. Disputes led to violent language, and not infrequently into the magistrates' court. Even with an honest and good-tempered gatekeeper the situation had complications enough. All stock passing from field to field, or from farmstead and home to field again, was entitled to free passage. But everything being driven to market was liable to toll. It is easy to see that in these considerations endless questionings and delays might be involved. But clearly the most subtle and far-reaching disputes were those in regard to the intersection of Turnpike Trust roads and Free roads. In debouching from a free road to a turnpike road you were entitled to a run of a certain distance before you were chargeable with tolls. In a general way this amounted to a free run till you came to the nearest turnpike gate.[1] But there were

[1] "All horses or carriages, cattle or other beasts, crossing any turnpike road, or not going more than a hundred yards thereon, are free from toll." *The Oxford Journal*, 21 February, 1835.

instances of these free roads having bars upon them where they joined the turnpike road, for the purpose of holding for toll the traffic which had been using the turnpike road since the last gate. Where the free road simply ran across the turnpike road at right angles there was no question about your crossing free, even though you went through a gate. But when the "crossing" involved going along the turnpike road for a space to reach the turning into the opposite free road, the question for the gatekeeper to determine was whether you intended simply to "cross" his employer's road, or whether, once on it, you were going to make use of it for more than the allowed distance. Naturally the gatekeeper was apt at times to refuse to give you the benefit of the doubt, and to keep his gate locked till you produced the toll. A North Oxfordshire nobleman, held up in this way in the year 1850, went home, collected several teams of his cart-horses, harnessed them to the offending gate, and brought it to the ground. Through February and March of 1833 controversy raged in Burford in respect to a "catch" turnpike gate erected on the highway above the town

"by the Faringdon Trust, though their road goes only for 320 yards."[1] How curious and arbitrary gate impositions could be may be gathered from the story of one instituted in Bermondsey by an old Jew owning house-property there, from which the inhabitants were unable to free themselves for many years, and then only after much litigation.[2] Until the year 1871 there was still, in most parts of England, a turnpike house every five or six miles, and some five thousand men were employed as collectors of tolls.[3] The system fell very hardly upon country tradesmen. An ordinary spring cart with one horse was charged at fourpence-halfpenny, and his road payments for the year often cost a shopkeeper as much as his premises. Until within the memory of many persons now living a handcart brought goods from the station into the town of Charlbury, in order to avoid the tax on horsed vehicles, payable at the little gatehouse, which, low-browed and wizened, still stands on the banks of the Evenlode. The place that tolls of all kinds had in the life of the country-

[1] In 1833 Burford tolls let for £310.

[2] *The Oxford Journal*, 28 May, 1836.

[3] *The Progress of the Nation*, Hirst, p. 548.

side is indicated by the wording of the notice which appears in *The Oxford Journal* of 10 January, 1835: "We are happy to announce a very liberal act on the part of the Earl of Abingdon. On the occasion of the marriage of Lord Norreys on Wednesday the noble Earl gave orders that the toll heretofore collected at Eynsham Bridge for foot passengers should for ever cease from that time." The relief was for foot-passengers only; up to the date at which I am writing (1913) we pay at that very bridge a penny for each of our wheels every time we motor, or drive, or cycle to Oxford.

The pikemen were a very interesting class. They knew the appearance of every coach and cart in their neighbourhood. It was well worth their while to be observant in all sorts of ways. They were often called as witnesses in criminal trials; William Kench, pikeman at Baywell Gate, near Charlbury, who is still living, convicted two sheep-stealers by his testimony. Many tales are told of Robert Sleath, keeper of the Barban Gate, on the Cheltenham to Worcester road, at the beginning of the century. One at least of these is fully authenticated. In the spring of 1796 George III was in residence

at Cheltenham. It was the ordinary custom, of course, for toll-gate keepers to rush to open their gates before Royalty. But Robert Sleath, like some others since his day, had evidently a taste for legal points. In 1793 the office of Commander-in-Chief had been instituted, and the personal command of the Army had ceased to vest, even formally, in the King. If the King were not free of the tolls as an officer in high command, Robert Sleath seems to have argued, by what other right was he free? At any rate, by persistently locking his gate and barring the way, Sleath ultimately mulcted an amazed and enraged Equerry of the sum of twenty-seven shillings.[1]

The difficulties, not to say the dangers, of coach travelling early in the century were many. Inquests upon persons who have died in a coach or immediately after alighting from it appear frequently in the newspapers of the time. Some of these deaths are attributed to cold; some of them probably were occasioned by fright. In July, 1817, we read: "On Thursday last Spencer's opposition Gloucester coach on its way to London was overturned

[1] *The Gloucester Gazette*, 8 June, 1796.

near Burford. We cannot deprecate in too strong terms the present infamous practice of coaches racing with each other, whereby the lives of the passengers are put in imminent danger."[1] In March, 1829, the London and Gloucester mail-coach, full inside and out, is overturned a mile before Oxford.[2] Spite of Mr. Macadam, and increased road charges, up to 1820 highways in most parts of England remained in a scandalous condition. A Parliamentary Committee in 1819 reported that, though road tolls had been doubled in the last ten years, the roads were worse rather than better, on account of the corruption in the appointments of road surveyors which prevailed almost everywhere—undertakers, bakers, publicans, and bedridden invalids being among the persons appointed. Of the roads under such charge "Mr. Foment of Thatcham, who works different coaches about five hundred miles a day, says he has killed some hundred horses (extra) in pulling through dirty gravel piled up in the middle of the road." The same witness went on to speak of his conviction that one-third of the horse labour is saved in running

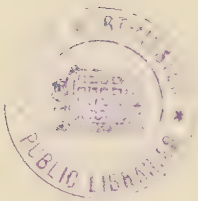
[1] *The Oxford Journal.* [2] *Ibid.*

a fast coach over the portion of the Reading to London road "where Mr. Macadam's plan has been adopted."[1] I have come across several instances, just before the roads were macadamized, of persons who died from the jolting they experienced.

Among the greatest difficulties in coach travelling must have been the unavoidable delays in cross-country journeys. Richard Cumberland writes to his brother that he had fully intended to start for London by the Herefordshire "Dilligence" one Friday afternoon, "but this and the Oxford and Gloucester one were all filled a week before." How often this must have been the case, and how, more often, a diligence or a post-chaise part of the journey would be securely accomplished only to discover at the junction with the main route that the mail had no unoccupied seats. Such enforced delays were no doubt the reason for the great numbers of bedrooms to be found at

[1] *The Edinburgh Review*, 1819. The Superintendent of Mail Coaches, giving evidence to the Parliamentary Commission of 1819, said: "I have lately passed over the road from Oxford to Henley and London; it is certainly in a very improper state." *Remarks on the Present System of Road-making*, by J. Loudon Macadam, 1822.

THE SWAN INN, TETSWORTH



inns in such places as Burford and Enstone. At Enstone these are specially noticeable; because there, since the stopping of the coaches, life has almost ebbed out. Many-windowed, but sightless, the Lichfield Arms stares on the empty street. Yet until the 'forties flourishing advertisements of the house appeared in the local newspapers, and old men still tell of the evenings when a band played beside the famous fountains, and in all the six inns there was never a bedroom to spare. Persons in Charlbury hardly more than middle-aged talk of having their letters addressed "near Enstone" for quicker despatch. No other spot in our district strikes me as quite so vivid an example as Enstone is of what it meant to a place to be deserted by the coaches, though it seems remarkable enough to find houses in what is now the lovely remoteness of Temple Guiting advertised in 1819 as "upon the turnpike road from Cheltenham to Stow." Burford, though left far enough aside by railways, has not this effect of desolation. It always had its trades, and when the coaches ceased to run it could still be self-supporting. You will see no vast blank inns there. One of the great ones is

transformed into cottages; what was the inn yard is now a cul-de-sac of two rows of dwellings, but the upper part of one of the rows still shows the old overhang of the inn gallery. Another inn has been cut into two good-sized houses.

A writer to the newspapers to-day, on the subject of the congestion of traffic in London, spoke of the present overgorged streets as "having been made for sedan-chairs." The statement is a picturesque one made to prove a point. But it has a real basis. A colour print hanging before me of the streets in front of the Mansion House in 1800 shows how different the traffic was then from what it is now. London at that date was a place almost entirely of foot-passengers, sedan-chairs, and horsemen. Members of Parliament always rode down to the House, private coaches being reserved mainly for formal occasions and considerable journeys. The upping steps, many of which remain in our district, were used chiefly to enable women to seat themselves on their pillions. By 1820 horsed cabs were beginning to be used, but they were not general enough in Oxford before 1840 for any regula-

tions to have been framed as to their conduct.[1]

Shortly before the opening of our period an immense improvement in the mail-coach service had come about. In 1783 a Mr. Palmer, who was controlling the theatre at Bath, had found his most important performances imperilled by the fact that it was impossible to count on the arrival of the mail coaches which brought his actors from London. He drafted, and laid before Pitt, a detailed scheme for reform in running the mails. Heavy vested interests opposed it; it was, however, adopted in 1784. For some number of years Palmer superintended the new system himself, and so great was his success that in 1801 almost all the mails were being conveyed in half the time they had taken twenty years earlier. Under Palmer's rule all the evening mails out of London left the old Post Office in Lombard Street at the same hour, 8 p.m.[2] Happily, among so much that is forgotten, De Quincey's essay on the

[1] *The Oxford Journal*, 1 February, 1834.

[2] A curious relic of these days remained in a law which was unrepealed till the 'eighties, forbidding any person not carrying mails to sound a horn within a certain radius of the Post Office. See *The Times*, 5 June, 1882.

Mail Coach has preserved that scene for us; he reminds us too that, because of the number of students travelling to and fro eight times in the year, Oxford saw more of "Mr. Palmer's mails" than did any other provincial town. Palmer's coaches all carried armed guards—a fact which is proof, if proof were needed, that the menace of highway robberies continued into the nineteenth century. Palmer's mails worked on exact time-tables, and so made possible the appearance of a coaching "Bradshaw" in the shape of *Cary's Itinerary*. A second edition of it appeared in 1802, and this edition may be considered as opening our period. In immediately succeeding years the increase in the number of coaches was very rapid. Before 1803 only one stage coach had run between Paddington and the City, and the fare for the journey had been two shillings.[1] By 1820 three hundred mails passed Hyde Park Corner each day. Something of the traffic and bustle of a mail road in 1819 has been brought home to me by a time-table I have worked out from the *Itinerary* for that year. This shows that no less than forty coaches passed along the main road

[1] *The Oxford Journal*, 27 July, 1833.

STABLES OF THE SWAN INN, TETSWORTH

above Burford every twenty-four hours.[1] Some time ago I had been inclined to question the statement of an old woman, who averred that, in her childhood on the Kent road out of London, a coach changed horses at the inn where she lived every quarter of an hour. I do not in any way question it now ; that road served not only Dover, but also places such as Canterbury, Deal, Ramsgate, and Sandwich. Another proof of the hard work on a coaching road may still be seen at the Swan Inn at Tetsworth. This was the first change out from Oxford on the mail road to London by High Wycombe. The inn had stabling for no less than a hundred and twenty horses ; and the present owners of the house have, with no little public spirit, preserved as a curiosity the long ranges of building for which there is now no use.[2] The mail roads must have borne for a time as constant a stream of traffic as runs on the busiest railway to-day.

The fast coaches were in general the telegraph service of their time. De Quincey has told us of the coachmen and horses in Lombard

[1] Appendix, p. 269.

[2] I am indebted to A. N. Hall, Esq., for my two pictures of this beautiful building.

Street chafing for the start which was to bear the news of Salamanca or Waterloo through an expectant land. "By Guard" in those days was the most expeditious means of communication between distant points; in this way the results of country elections, and requests for help in quelling riots, reached the Ministry in London. Coming from town the mail guards shouted the news to persons gathered along the route, and, during the trial of Queen Caroline, for instance, at every stopping-place crowds were assembled. In *The Oxford Journal* for 28 February, 1829, we read, in connection with the University election contest between Sir Robert Inglis and the Right Hon. Robert Peel: "Amongst the extraordinary efforts which have been made by newspapers at these times, perhaps none ever equalled that made on the present occasion by the *Sun* newspaper. The speeches and the State of the Poll of the Election for the University, announced at four o'clock on Thursday, was printed to the extent of two columns in the *Sun* at half-past eight o'clock at night, and the Papers containing the Report were in Oxford at six o'clock the next morning. This is an instance of dispatch never

equalled, and we should have treated it as incredible had we not ocular demonstration to support the fact."

I find it difficult, in writing this book, to suppress exclamations of surprise at the speed with which things, once generally known, come to be forgotten. The posting[1] system is a notable case of this. It must have been so wide, and so highly organized, and it is so comparatively recent. Yet among all my acquaintance I have not been able to discover a person who can really inform me as to certain of its details. The cost of posting in 1820 to 1839 was from a shilling to half a crown a mile. The Frogmill Inn, near Northleach, advertised "Chaise and pair 1s. a mile, four horses 2s., saddle-horse 6d. a mile."[2] In a notice as to a pair of lovers eloping from a ball at Stow-on-the-Wold, we find: "A carriage and four was in readiness to receive them at a short distance, and relays of horses had been prepared on the

[1] The words posting, post-chaise, post-boy, are memorials of the fact that the letting of horses to travellers was originally the monopoly of persons who horsed the king's posts. *The History of the Post Office*, by Herbert Joyce.

[2] *The Gloucester Gazette*, 8 July, 1796. *The Oxford Journal*, 22 October, 1836; Bird-In-Hand, Burford, advertisement.

whole line of road to Gretna."[1] Now in what way were relays "arranged" along so extensive a route? (Presumably in such a case the business had to be done swiftly, and unless there was an easily operating system the secret must have come out.) Most puzzling question of all —how were payments arranged? Was the fare paid for the whole distance, or did the passenger have to pay each stage and each postillion separately? The fact that road-books of the time give lump-sum fares for long distances would seem to point to the former conclusion. But in that case how very elaborate must have been the organization which ensured a due proportion of payment to every posting stable concerned. This question of payments must have been complicated, too, by the fact that, unless persons were travelling a longer distance than seventy miles, the horses and post-boy only, and not the chaise, changed at the end of the stage. Of the three methods of conveyance generally in use between 1800 and 1840—posting, coach-travelling, and wagon-travelling—posting was of course the most luxurious and aristocratic.

[1] *The Oxford Journal*, 30 November, 1833.

Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb have remarked that the story of the Turnpike Trusts has yet to be written. The heyday of them, from about 1820 to 1839, when Telford and Macadam were enabling the speed and increase in number of mail coaches to link up the kingdom, was brief; but it was great while it lasted. In 1837 the people of England were paying £1,400,000 a year in road tolls.[1] Each stage-coach running daily from London to Manchester contributed £1700 a year to the Turnpike Trusts on its route. Every coach throughout England and Scotland was paying in tolls something like £7 annually for every mile that it ran.[2] Small wonder that Englishmen then looked on road tolls as an absolute security, and that they poured money into the Turnpike Trusts. Whatever else might come or go, it was argued that, in an industrially developing England, road traffic must most certainly increase. A book summarizing Turnpike laws in 1822[3] makes it abundantly clear that the tyranny of the motor which we are apt

[1] *A Treatise on Roads*, Sir Henry Parnell, 1838.

[2] *The Story of the King's Highway*, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, p. 125.

[3] *A Digest of Laws Relating to Turnpikes:* Longmans, Hurst & Co., 1822.

to complain of so loudly to-day had at least its equal in the tyranny of the coaches. It was against the law for any camp, tent, or stall, to be pitched by the roadside; for any blacksmith's window to be uncurtained after dark; for bonfires to be made or fireworks let off within eighty feet of a turnpike road; for any game to be played on the roadside "or in any exposed position near thereto"; for any windmill to be erected nearer than two hundred yards from any part of the road. All straying beasts were impounded, and only released on their owner's payment of five shillings and costs; no door or gate was allowed to open towards the road, and no one under thirteen years old was allowed to drive on it.

As Mr. and Mrs. Webb ask, who, at the moment the coaches were thus supreme, could have predicted that there was about to descend upon the Turnpike investors what Sir James McAdam called "the calamity of railways," and that, between 1837 and 1850, the revenue of the Trusts was to fall by half a million? The Stockton and Darlington Railway had indeed been opened in 1825, and the Liverpool and Manchester in 1830; but these undertakings

had been generally unpopular[1] and had not affected the public at large.[2] The crash when it came seemed to those involved in it to have come about quite unexpectedly. Not only were thousands of investors ruined, but the upkeep of the road was thrown back on the parishes.[3] Part indeed of the disaster overtaking the Trusts was due to their corrupt management; but their death-blow, of course, was the general advent of railways which, from early in the 'fifties to the 'eighties, were to leave the mail roads, at their busiest, to foot passengers and

[1] My father's father, who was one of the guests—of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway—on the occasion of the running of the first passenger train, used to tell his grandchildren how the Duke of Wellington, who was also a guest, was plastered with mud in his efforts to shield the ladies from the filth that the populace, ranged by the sides of the railway line, threw at the travellers. In *The Oxford Journal* for January, 1837, it is argued, against bringing a railway to Oxford, that sparks from the engines will burn up houses and crops, and that the presence of the line will encourage and increase homicide.

[2] The purely local aspect railway enterprises wore at this time may be judged from the fact that, at the date of the Great Western Railway Bill, the idea had not occurred to any of its promoters that railway lines some day would be connected, and therefore gauges needed to be uniform.

[3] This double impost—liability for keeping the roads as well as the paying of tolls—brought about the *Rebecca* riots, which, though chiefly in Wales, spread to the Stroud valley and into Oxfordshire.

carriers' wagons, at their emptiest, to a grass-grown stillness. How deep was the slumber that fell then upon even main roads is to be judged from the flurry and indignation that greeted the appearance of bicycles on them forty years later.

CHAPTER VI

THE MACHINE RIOTS AND THE NEW POOR LAW

IN November of 1830, the editor of *The Oxford Journal* writes: "We had been in hopes that this county would have escaped the commotion that has prevailed in Kent, Sussex, Hants, and Berkshire; but unfortunately our hopes have not been realized." A year earlier "An Oxfordshire Vicar" had written to the same paper: "The alarming condition of our labouring poor requires immediate and most serious attention; if something be not done to raise them from their present degradation the most deplorable consequences may be about to follow."[1] The months succeeding the one in which these last words were penned had made up a spring, which is one of the coldest upon record. Even the most high and dry of the newspaper critics of the events of 1830 were from time to time to ejaculate, "God grant this winter

[1] *The Oxford Journal*, 3 January, 1829.

be not like the last!" Meanwhile sermon after sermon inculcating meekness under suffering had been delivered from Oxfordshire pulpits and printed and circulated among our villagers;[1] one, entitled *The Present State of the Peasantry*, preached by a certain W. M. Kinsey, B.D., had even been published and distributed by the Corporation of Abingdon.[2] None the less the issue of *The Oxford Journal*, containing the Editor's lament with which I have opened this chapter, contains a list also of breakers of thrashing-machines who have just been brought into gaol by a detachment of Oxfordshire Yeomanry; a swearing-in of special constables has taken place on the previous Wednesday; and the district is filled with alarms.[3] "We have been given to understand," the writer of the newspaper leader continues, "that strangers are traversing the country to excite the labouring poor to acts of outrage. They generally travel on horseback, or in buggies, sometimes in post-chaises. These itinerants are the forerunners of tumult and mischief; threat-

[1] See the Bodleian Library, 22,873, e, 8.

[2] *The Oxford Journal*, 24 December, 1830.

[3] The Yarnton Constable's Book has an entry of £1 1s. 0d. paid at this time for twenty-five constables' staves.

ening letters follow next, and then come violence and outrage. Strangers coming into towns and villages should be questioned as to their business, as to where they come from and where they are going to ; and if they cannot give a good account of themselves they should be detained and brought before the nearest magistrate to be dealt with according to the Vagrant Act. Special attention should be paid to their parcels and pockets that they may not conceal or destroy what they have in their possession." So seriously is this advice taken, that a fortnight later the curate of Faringdon finds himself landed in gaol on suspicion, because he has ventured, in the course of a walk, to make a few intelligent enquiries in the hamlet of Goosey.[1] Yet the reverend gentleman, one might have supposed, would have been alive to his danger ; for Faringdon was in a fairly nervous condition. A week earlier its reporter had written : " The incendiary who signs himself ' Swing ' has attempted to intimidate several farmers in this neighbourhood by his menaces of conflagration, etc., unless the machines are destroyed and the labourers employed on more liberal terms."

[1] *The Oxford Journal*, 18 December, 1830.

Through the following month—of December—alarm was to increase very rapidly. There are numbers of commitments to the county gaol of breakers, and suspected breakers, of thrashing and hay-making machines. "These poor misguided men," the magistrates say, "are spreading desolation and terror through our land." News is sent to Sir Robert Peel, who upon his part forwards it to all magistrates in disturbed districts, of seven hundred "Promethean bulbs" bought by a distinguished-looking stranger from a chemist in the Strand. The heading of this story in *The Oxford Journal* is "Methods Adopted by the Incendiaries in Firing Wheat Stacks," and it is welcome to its readers, because respectable local feeling has refused to believe that the "diabolical outrages" of machine breaking and rick burning could be the work of any but "foreigners." Meanwhile more labourers had been arrested for machine breaking and transported, from Little Milton, Broadwell, Blenheim Park, Woodstock, Old Woodstock, Chipping Norton, Abingdon, Bibury, and Fairford. After rioting at Bibury and Fairford twenty-eight persons were tried. All but one were found guilty; seven were

sentenced to fourteen years' transportation, twenty to seven years' transportation. An Abingdon man was arrested and convicted "for collecting the mob by sounding a horn."

As the fears and commitments increase—through the opening months of 1831—suggestions of many kinds are volunteered. There is, of course, a great outcrop of emigration schemes, and there are plans for Houses of Industry. A poet comes forward in *The Oxford Journal* (it is almost the first time such a person has appeared there) to ask:

"Why Boys! What's the matter? Why all this ado?
Are ye mad, to kick up such a hollabaloo?
Will burning machinery make the mill go?
Or burning your corn fill your belly? Oh, no!
Though the times are but bad, you will render them worse;
By refusing to work you will cut your own purse.
Home, home, Boys! and mind your own business; for shame!
Leave Cobbett and Hunt, if they please to declaim
Of their honour and worth known to none but themselves;
Go and help your good wives to replenish their shelves;
They want you at home. Leave Frenchmen to brag,
If it please them, poor souls! of their tri-colour flag;
That flag which, in spite of their arrogant pother,
We have kicked from one end of the globe to the other.
The Farmers, in order to better your diet,
Will better your wages—but not if you riot."

All the published recommendations, happily,

are not quite of this calibre. The Faringdon reporter, of the same paper, writes: "It is very evident that partial measures are not enough to quell the present disturbances. If a small portion of land was allotted to the occupiers of cottages, just sufficient for their necessities, it would help much to calm the irritation." Even at the moment a few voices were raised to support this suggestion, and it was to have many echoes a year later, when, at the time of the Special Commission on the Bristol riots, it was remembered that a considerable number of the reckless and embittered men had been small farmers twenty years earlier.[1] "A Bloxham Farmer" wrote then to *The Oxford Journal*: "Capital has seized on every inch of land, and has thrown the husbandman on the parish." The crowding out of the small squire and the "subsidence farmer" by the manufacturing landlord of the early nineteenth century is too large a subject to enter on here, but it had a very considerable part in this peasant rising of 1831 and 1832. Most valuable and interesting, however, of all the contributions to the local papers on the meaning of the riots is a series of

[1] In this connection a pamphlet should be read—*The History of Swing*, the Kent Rick-burner, Written by Himself. R. Carlile, 62 Fleet Street, 1830.

articles contributed by the Reverend Mr. Jordan, of Church Handborough.[1] He argues vigorously on the labourer's behalf, and states in a paragraph headed "Old and New Times": "In the year 1732 the wages of the agricultural labourer were 6s. to 7s. a week. The price of wheat was then 2s. 9d. per bushel. In 1829–1830, the price of wheat is 6s. 6d. to 8s. a bushel, malt 8s. to 9s. a bushel, labourers' wages 7s. to 9s. a week. It is plain that the labourer can now procure only one-half of the quantity of bread, and one-fourth the quantity of beer he could in 1732, while the rent of land is now four times as much as it was then."

Of the Quarter Sessions to be held at Oxford in January, 1831, we are told that "the calendar is amazingly heavy."[2] The Sessions are opened on the following Tuesday morning and continued till late on Wednesday afternoon. Even the most officially-minded newspaper reporter finds himself unfortunately troubled in their progress, and looks in various directions for comfort. He discovers it in regions that seem to us rather curious. He says, for instance, "We observed

[1] *The Oxford Journal*, February and March, 1832.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1 January, 1831.

with much satisfaction that most of the prisoners had previously to the committal of these outrages borne good characters"; and later, after the Assizes, he writes of a petition for the commutation of death sentences, "This is not with a view to screen the unhappy men from punishment for the outrages they have been guilty of, but the petitioners being immediately on the spot where many lawless acts were committed, and considering the unpremeditated manner in which most, if not all, entered into it, are of the mind that by banishment for ever from their native land the ends of justice may be as satisfactorily answered as by the forfeiture of their lives." At one point, however, the reporter does commit himself unreservedly. He says of the scene in court when the sentences are pronounced: "Altogether, a more dreadful sight we never have witnessed," for the condemned men, he repeats, are not of the kind usually met with in court, but are "people who have been deluded into taking part in these outrages and who have always before been of good character." It is easy for us to be wise and generous to-day, long after the event. Nothing is simpler than to exclaim now at the

undignified panic of the governing classes. But the more we read of the records, the more we shall feel that the times were desperately difficult, and the less facilely we shall judge those who had to contend with them. On certain points in these trials of 1831–1832, however, opinion cannot be suspended; bribes were offered to informers in a way that appals us —£1000 and a free pardon were offered any labourer who would inform on an incendiary— and nothing is to be said for a system of transportation which made no arrangements at all for observing the limits of its sentences. It is eighty years now since these particular transportations took place. For more than sixty of them one woman, hereabouts, through her youth, and middle, and old age, slept wakefully of nights and moved stealthily by day, listening always for footsteps. In 1831, her husband and her son had both been transported—one for fourteen and the other for seven years—for their part in one of these village risings. Till the fourteen years had passed she would not let herself expect them. "The one must wait for the other," she said. But from the end of that time for forty-six years she hoped through each

hour, and she died in her chair turned towards the east, because she had heard that it was out of the sunrise travellers from Australia would come.

In October of this year—1831—a very strange story, from Abingdon, of the shipping off of a suspected youth, Richard Wordley, to Australia, gives us a measure of the nervous tension of the time.[1] There have been ricks burned about Abingdon and the boy has been suspected, though nothing can be proved against him. After much persuasion, however, he "has consented to a voluntary banishment to Australia"; he has been despatched at the town's charge, and "He is now on his way to Sydney, on board the *John Woodall*, his passage having been paid, a proper outfit furnished him at the expense of the parish; and also a good situation promised him at his destination." The reporter adds as an afterthought: "No immediate confession has yet been made by him." Probably the less enquiry made as to the nature of the "good situation" the better. Let us hope the Abingdon authorities, in their list of benefits, did not guarantee comfort and

[1] *The Oxford Journal*, 8 October, 1831.

COTTAGES AT BIBURY

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

decency upon the voyage. Four and a half years later[1] the Van Diemen's Land *Colonial Times* was to note : " The arrival of the *Sarah* has presented a novel feature in emigration. The whole of the passengers by this vessel have arrived without disturbance." These years of the machine riots, 1831 and 1832, saw, as I have said, a large increase in arrangements for emigration. Vessels going to New York advertise in all our papers, announcing " fuel and abundance of good water are carried by the ship." Provisions were furnished to parishes or individuals by contractors, and are brought on board by the emigrants themselves. One firm announces that it has provided for four men —Joy, Greenwood, Heltham, Lawrence—embarked from Chedworth and Northleach for Quebec, 40 lbs. of bacon, 168 lbs. of bread, 30 lbs. of beef, 10 lbs. of butter, 4 lbs. of coffee, 10 lbs. of cheese, 14 lbs. of flour, 42 lbs. of meal, 420 lbs. of potatoes, 10 lbs. of rice, 10 lbs. of sugar, 10 lbs. of treacle, and four dozen herrings.[2]

Early in 1832 cholera appeared in our district.

[1] 24 February, 1835.
[2] *The Oxford Journal*, 7 July, 1832.

The epidemic was considerable, and in March Fast Days on its account were being observed in Chipping Norton and other places. For some time it continued to spread, and on 1 December we find the Burford correspondent of *The Oxford Journal* writing: "How strange it is that at such a time as this, when Divine Providence is manifesting his anger at our transgressions by sending his Pestilence through the land, persons should be found wicked enough to add to their common offences against him by crimes of uncommon turpitude! We allude to the different acts of incendiarism reported in the papers." Machine breaking was over, but, to some extent, rick burning continued. The whole of 1832, however, had not been overcast. Far from it. If we had not an exact parallel to them in our own day, the immense hopes that had been built on the Reform Bill would seem almost incredibly childish. Hardly less than the millennium, it had been said, and the mass of the working people had believed, the Bill was to bring about. At its passing, in July of 1832, the populace had made festival from end to end of the land. In these festivities —dinners, bonfires, and general illuminations—

our part of the country had had its full share. Stow-on-the-Wold, indeed, had distinguished itself with an all-night celebration. Into this intense democratic rejoicing it is more than a little bewildering to fit the fact that the Royal Commission, which was to issue in the New Poor Law, was already sitting, in 1832. And if it is bewildering to us now, what must it have been in 1835 to the simple and ignorant labourer? In so far as news of the Inquiry had reached him at all, he must surely have supposed that his glorious Reformed Parliament, whose first act had been freeing the West Indian slaves, was about to allot him some share in the wealth of his country. That the Poor Relief, to which since 1795 he had been accustomed, was about to be taken from him was the last thing he possibly could have imagined.

The Speenhamland system of Poor Relief (resulting from the deliberations of eighteen persons at the Pelican Inn, Speenhamland, near Newbury, in May, 1795) is too notorious to need much description. What is not, however, so widely known is that the principle of it had been established at Oxford five months before,[1]

[1] At Oxford Quarter Sessions, 13 January, 1795.

when the magistrates there had decided that certain incomes were "absolutely necessary for the support of the poor industrious labourer, and that when the utmost industry of a family cannot produce the undermentioned sums, it must be made up by the overseer, exclusive of rent."[1] As to the nature of the feelings prompting, first, the Oxford justices' idea and, later, the adoption of a similar system all over England, opinions are widely opposed.[2] One thing, however, is certain. The rottenness of a system which not only took out of the rates what should have been paid in wages, but put a premium on thriftlessness and increased illegitimacy by bounds, would have appeared much earlier than it did, had it not been for the confusing of every sort of economic issue by the French war. As it was, the allowance system, intended at first probably as a temporary expedient, continued, and swelled to proportions that threatened to submerge whole rural

[1] The sums were: A single man according to his labour. A man and his wife not less than 6s. a week. A man and his wife with one or two small children not less than 7s. a week. For every additional child not less than 1s. a week.

[2] A considerable element in the problem before the Oxfordshire authorities at the moment was the loss of family wages from spinning in the cottages. See pp. 46–48.

districts. The Royal Commission appointed by the Reformed Parliament of 1832, found, in the south-east and south Midland counties particularly, a desperate condition of affairs. However well-intentioned in the beginning, the system had grown now corrupt, past all mending. An army of petty and ignorant officials had come into being, and instances of the way their administration vacillated from wanton laxity on the one hand to a tyrannical harshness on the other, are to be found in newspaper reports of the barbarous struggles of different overseers as to pauper removals.[1] And the

[1] A typical example may be found in *The Oxford Journal* for 13 February, 1830, under the heading of "A very Unfeeling Act on the Part of the Officers of a Parish in the Forest of Wychwood." The expense of these transactions too may be gathered from accounts such as the following, kept by the parish officer of Finstock :—

March 7th, 1829. The Parish of Finstock to Thomas Dring.

	£	s.	d.
Mr. Brook on the Road	2	4	2
Expenses in London and Horse and Cart to take the famley into the Borough to the Rye Waggon		4	6
Pd. the waggoner to take them to Rye from London	1	10	0
Myself going to Rye and back, 11 Days at 5/- per day	2	15	0
	£6	13	8

Later there is the additional bill :

Carriage of Brooks famley	1	4	0
Ludges (? lodgings)		7	6
Carriage and Sustennance		3	0
	£1	14	6

worst cases, we may be pretty sure, would not get into the papers. So vast were the Commission's labours that its Report was not issued till 1834, but when it came it was drastic. The Elizabethan Poor Law, it said, had worked fairly well until the great war with France, when at a time of the industrial revolution, high prices, and starvation wages, the system of parish doles had been instituted. Since then England had been moving towards ruin ; and unless the present parish rates were quickly decreased the country would find itself bankrupt. The Committee recommended abolition of outdoor relief, the establishment of a workhouse test, alteration of the Law of Settlement, and the creation of a central Board with power to group parishes into unions, and to supervise the whole system.

The Report, as I have already suggested was certain to be the case, was met by an outburst of popular feeling—feeling which helped very largely to generate the Chartist Movement now coming into existence on account of the working people's bitter disappointment at the results of the Reformed Parliament. This movement was to focus itself presently in *The People's*

Charter with its six demands — Universal Suffrage, Annual Parliaments, Vote by Ballot, Abolition of Property Qualification, Payment of Members, and Equal Electoral Districts. "The National Land Society's" small holdings at Minster Lovell gave it a connection with our district.[1] But, for the moment, the movement was powerless. On Saturday, 21 February, 1835, the Assistant Commissioner under the Poor Law Amendment Act arrived at Burford and explained to the farmers of the neighbourhood what seemed to him the best plan for a union of the different parishes in this part of the country. "It was," says the Burford correspondent, "to erect a sufficiently large building on this side of Witney, as the most centrical spot."[2] The farmers, naturally enough in view of the immediate decrease of rates, proved very amenable to explanation. The labourers proved less so, and in May the same Burford reporter comments upon rioting in his district. Some of those who have been accustomed to relief, and are now refused and told to go into the workhouse instead, such as the Cowleys at Deddington,[3] steal, and are promptly trans-

[1] Appendix, p. 277.
[2] *The Oxford Journal*, 28 February, 1835.
[3] *Ibid.*, 14 March, 1835.

ported. An interesting and really impartial statement of the situation, addressed "To All Poor Persons Who Have Received Parish Relief Within The Witney Union," appears in *The Oxford Journal* for 3 October, 1835; it demonstrates that the present abuses of outdoor relief cannot continue, and attempts to explain exactly what the Workhouse is to be.

An alteration in the Poor Law had been inevitable; the reformers' intentions were praiseworthy; none the less it is open to doubt whether the change would have been made with quite such suddenness and severity if it had not been for the new middle-class members of Parliament. Disraeli and his "Young England" party of 1843 had much greater understanding of the labourer's feelings and position in the matter. *The Times* opposed the new Act violently; and the London correspondent of *The Oxford Journal,* who, of course, was a Tory, wrote, 21 February, 1835: "How the workhouse system of the new Poor Law Bill operates daily experience but too painfully shows; there is scarcely a prison in the kingdom in which delinquents of all grades are not better fed and clothed, and with more

actual comforts about them, than the inmates of as many workhouses would be found to possess. When we find the criminal better fed and clothed than the pauper, we infer that in the one case it must be overdone, or in the other far below what it ought to be. It is at the latter conclusion we are inclined to arrive when we hear of little more than threepence a day being the cost of victualling the poor in a Metropolitan workhouse. And if such be the case in the Metropolis, where for the most part intelligent individuals, controlled by a vigilant press, look after such matters, how greatly will the evil and oppression be enhanced in distant parishes, where the flinty heart presides uncontrolled, and where the treatment of the poor only becomes known through the post-mortem details of the Coroner's inquest."

CHAPTER VII

WYCHWOOD FOREST FAIR, OTHER FAIRS, AND THE PEOPLE WHO WENT TO THEM

WYCHWOOD Forest Fair has a very large place in our old people's memories. Through the second quarter of the nineteenth century it was the great annual event of the neighbourhood. For some time before it took place each year notice was given in the Oxford newspapers that all Shows and Booths coming to it would have to be set up in "broad regular streets," that passage might be left for the long procession of coaches, headed by the Duke of Marlborough's and Lord Churchill's, with which the week's proceedings were to open. The years between 1830 and 1845 saw an average attendance at the Fair of 20,000 persons. They were of all ranks and conditions; for every one within reach came to it, except a mere handful of those who felt conscientious objections. How deep this festivity went in the country-

side's life is shown by how difficult, for long how impossible, it was to suppress. On 25 September, 1830, *The Oxford Journal* published a notice of the Fair's discontinuance, signed by the Deputy Ranger of the Forest ; and the following handbill, dated 3 September, 1831, still hangs in an inn at Charlbury : " One mile from the plain where *Forest Fair* has usually been held but which has been discontinued. The inhabitants of Charlbury inform the Publick that they intend holding a Fair at Charlbury on Wednesday and Thursday the 14th and 15th of September in consequence of Wychwood Forest Fair being discontinued, assuring those who honour Charlbury with their company that every accommodation and amusement will be afforded on reasonable terms. Booths and stalls will be erected on the playing close." Nevertheless, by some means or other the Fair was re-established in Wychwood, and continued to flourish there for another quarter of a century. It was held last in 1855,[1] and its

[1] The same inn at Charlbury that has the Forest Fair handbill has a notice from the Oxford, Worcester, and Wolverhampton Railway, giving particulars of arrangements for conveying visitors from every station on their line to the Wychwood Fair in September, 1855.

existence then was only terminated, not by formal proclamation, but by Lord Churchill's digging trenches across the plain over which nothing could be driven.

The argument for the suppression of the Fair since, and including, that of Arthur Young's *Report* of 1809, was the fact that it attracted rogues of all kinds—pickpockets, bullies, and sharpers. The Ranger's notice of discontinuance, of 1830, declares that "over and above great injury done to the mounds, gates, roads, underwood, within the Forest, it has been intimated to the Ranger that this Fair has been the means of bringing into the neighbourhood vast numbers of idle and disorderly characters." Yet we have it on the authority of the Charlbury schoolmaster of the time that, during the Fair, summary vengeance fell on such offenders. He records one case of a culprit being carried by five Charlbury men to the nearest pond,[1] and being ducked there until he lost consciousness completely and had to be "artificially revived." This incident I find particularly interesting in its relation to a sentence in a letter written by George Cumberland in

[1] Newhill Plain overlooks the upper lake of Cornbury Park.

1775 to his brother in his parish of Driffield :— "I wish you would make a charity sermon and collect some money for the Society lately established to recover drowned persons." If Richard Cumberland fell in with this suggestion, his discourse may well have set on foot in our district knowledge this poor card-sharper was to benefit from fifty years after.

The date of the opening of the Forest Fair varied from 11 September to 17 September, for it was always on the Wednesday after Witney Feast, and Witney Feast commemorates the Feast of Saint Mary Virgin. This season is the loveliest in our year. Wychwood, docked and shrunken as it is to-day (in 1850 its open woodland was seven thousand acres), is glorious late in September. There are parts in it where the hoary and heavily ancient thorn trees are almost primeval in aspect, yet even their lichened and wizard-like age is magically kindled in autumn. Then the scarlet and crimson of holly and spindle berries turn the sky over them to aquamarine ; the Old Man's Beard streams in silver cascades ; and the colour of the beech leaves runs through lemon and orange to flame. The bracken everywhere has been breast high

and overhead in a great many places; its height is shrinking a little in September, but it spreads everywhere tawny and golden. Beneath and between all more recent planting, the place retains its true forest character, its underwood of thorns and alders and its patches of ling. Wychwood is noted for its flowers; and there wild strawberries grow of the kind that, in maturer years, we had begun to fear was but a memory of our childhood. Matthew Arnold has set our forest, safe for all time, into literature; though I have lately been told of a small girl in Oxford who questions why "distant" Wychwood's bowers, since the glades are for her but thirty minutes' run in a motor? Her elders might do well, by way of reply, to land her in one of the copses above Newhill Plain. If she did not feel remoteness in them, then, to my mind, her feelings are not of a kind worth very much troubling about. The ancient timelessness that Mr. W. H. Hudson conveys in his story of *The Old Thorn Tree* broods over everything there.

As to the look of the Fair, it is interesting to ask ourselves how far we are any of us able to imagine it? Few things could be more

instructive to our district to-day than a reproduction of it on the lines of a pageant. What has been amiss with almost all pageants, so far, has been their devotion to outstanding and alien occurrences (such as the visits of monarchs or courts) rather than to the customary and typical events of localities. However that may be, the task of re-creating even in imagination the Forest Fair of 1835 or 1840 would be most instructive and illuminating. At first sight the date seems so recent, only when the task was begun should we realize the endless avenue of enquiry, the huge gaps in our knowledge, that would open. Setting aside for the moment all the galaxy of shows, booths, and entertainments, consideration of the stalls and packmen alone would bring us to conditions of commerce, of manufacture even, strangely far from our own. Merchant Clothiers brought stuffs for sale by the yard that were unprocurable in the district at other times of the year. There were whole streets of stalls displaying only cloth, hosiery, and flannels. Several (one such was particularly noted) sold only hand-spun linen for smocks.

Then there were provision stalls. The country-

side's interest in these can be judged only by those who have some knowledge both of the labourer's food and of the limitations of shops in the 'forties. Bread was 1s. the four-pound loaf. Oxfordshire farm labourers' wages were from 7s. to 10s. per week, and the supreme concern of many of their lives was how to "save" the bread—potatoes, which had begun to be grown by our cottagers at the end of the eighteenth century, were mainly prized upon this account. Mr. Mann remembers an intelligent Charlbury labourer, about 1850, saying to his fellows: "Every Saturday night I take my money straight to our baker. We must have ten loaves a week; I get ten shillings. So there goes my week's money."[1] Bacon at this time was 9d. to 1s. a lb., lard 10d. to 1s., tea 4s., moist sugar 8d., lump sugar 1s. Rents of cottages were much as they are now, from 1s. 6d. to 2s. 6d. The labourer's wife's shopping in those days was in tiny quantities. A half-penny candle—tallow candles with cotton wicks which needed snuffing every twenty minutes were then luxuries to be lighted only at need—

[1] The corn duty was, of course, taken off in 1849; but the outbreak of the Crimean war made wheat very scarce, and it was long before the loaf fell to 10d.

¼ oz. of tea, ¼ lb. of sugar, ¼ lb. of bacon, ¼ lb. of cheese, with some treacle—this would be a typical cottage woman's order repeated three times a week if the husband were in full work. The list would be varied sometimes with a little packet of cocoa (charged thickly with starch and known as a "filling" drink) or some coffee. For though tea was then so expensive that 3s. 6d. a lb. was considered a "cutting price," coffee was not much dearer than it is now, because it was legal to mix it half-and-half with chicory. Butter was not bought by the labourer then.[1] Milk he could hardly obtain; morning and night in the cottages "tea-kettle broth" was much in evidence. This was composed of a thick slice of stale bread broken into a basin, with a lump of dripping, pepper, and salt, and hot water poured over it. To the head of the family in the fields a dinner of bread with a piece of bacon or cheese and a drink of small beer or "toast tea" was carried (for toast tea a crust was burned black, and hot water poured on it);

[1] For this budget and for the succeeding description of a grocer's shop at this time I am indebted to Mr. G. P. Hambidge, whose business at Burford goes back further than this date.

while the mother and children ate boiled potatoes and some sort of pudding.[1] How, it may be asked, in conditions of this kind was it that the labourer had any money to spend at the Fair? In the first place, special seasons—such as harvest time, when whole households, from grandparents to babies, gleaned in the fields—brought the labourer some extras. The Forest villages, too, have long been subsidized by the gloving industry. *The Oxford Gazetteer* of 1852 tells us that in Charlbury alone at that date upwards of a thousand persons were employed in gloving. Again, many of the visitors—those who instituted the Fair, it is said—came from Witney where the blanket trade was flourishing. In the second place, a little money went a very long way; working people then were content to spend pence where their grandchildren spend shillings.[2] The standard of expenditure in every class during the last sixty years has increased immensely. As an old mason who has been laying stones in King-

[1] Information from Mr. William Mann.

[2] Two fine old men now living in Charlbury tell me that they married, and were happy, in the 'forties on 7s. a week. Certainly they brought up their children well, and these children are all tradesmen or master workmen now.

ham since the day of Queen Victoria's accession said to me: "The farmers live as the gentry did in my father's time and the working folk live like the farmers." How different the standard of food was in all classes in 1850 from what it is now may be gleaned from a consideration of the provision shops of the time. Sixty years ago there were none of the piles of packages, boxes, glasses, and tins that castellate the counter and flank the floor space in a grocer's to-day. Instead there would have been a beautifully polished long counter, quite clear except for the scales and weights. Along the upper part of the wall, behind the counter, would stand tea canisters, and the discreet little Chinamen upon them would be the only pictures in the place. Below the canisters there would be drawers for sugars, rices, sagoes, barleys, arrowroots, and washing soda, with smaller drawers for salt, pepper, and spices. There would be treacle, but not a jam or marmalade pot would be in existence. There would be a few jars of anchovy paste and Gentleman's Relish, but they would be few, because in those days such things, preserved under clarified fat, did not keep well,

and the sale of them was very small. In a good shop you might have found perhaps eight sorts of biscuits—mixed, picnic, luncheon, ginger-bread, captain, abernethy, and nick-nack—and these, with a few tins of foreign cocoas, a few bottles of Reading and of Worcester sauce, a great many bars of yellow and of mottled soap, and a heavy fringe of dip candles hanging from the ceiling, would have been just about all. The only thing sold in tins by the village grocer of that day was sardines. All the sheets of paper that came wrapped round his goods he cherished; for every paper bag he used had to be pasted together on his own premises. There were, of course, no tinned or chilled meats, and as to fresh meat the labouring population did not see much of that on their tables. The farmer had his own; and we learn from *The Book of Snobs*, for instance, that at a date not so very much prior to the one we are considering a country house of moderate size had no sort of supply of butchers' meat. By 1850 most country towns large enough to support a lawyer or two, a doctor, and a banker, possessed a butcher's shop, but even large villages were still without one.

Prominent stalls at the Fair sold Jemmy Catnach's children's farthing and halfpenny chap-books, and penny lives of notorious criminals. The last were published solely for sale at fairs and by hawkers and pedlars.[1] These booklets with broadsides, and sheets, each with one or two woodcuts, often by Bewick, were slung, for the public to choose from, on strings from side to side of the stalls. How many of the people at the Fair, we may ask, could read these, or any other, books? In 1784, Sunday-schools had been founded in Gloucester.[2] They had spread soon to other places, and the House of Commons Committee for enquiry into the State of Mendicity and Vagrancy, in 1814, gives real testimony to their educational effects. "Children," comments this

[1] James Catnach in the course of eight days, in the year 1824, printed five hundred thousand copies of his account of one murder. By this alone he made a profit of £500; but so filthy were the pence he received for these wares—his goods were all paid for in pennies—that he always had to boil them in potash and vinegar in his house, 2 Monmouth Court, Seven Dials, before having them handled and sent in a hackney coach to the Bank of England. *The Life and Times of James Catnach*, by Charles Hindley, 1878.

[2] Their foundation is usually attributed to Robert Raikes, but a correspondent of *The Oxford Journal* for 22 October, 1831, states that the starting of them was due as much to the Reverend Mr. Stock of the Gloucester Cathedral School.

Committee's Report, "can be spared on the Sabbath who cannot be spared on any other day." (How eloquent that phrase is of the conditions of those opening chapters of *Clayhanger* I have already referred to, with their Bastille workhouses and their pot-bank and coal-mine child labour.) Public instruction did not exist. A Bill presented to Parliament in 1807, to establish parochial schools as they were known in Scotland and on the Continent, was thrown out by the Lords on the explicit ground that instruction would make the poor discontented with their lot. In 1833, annual educational grants were made, but for some years after this they were exclusively entrusted to the British and Foreign Schools Society and the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church.[1] The House of Commons

[1] Practically the earliest free school was opened by Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker, in St. George's Fields, London, in 1798. This grew so rapidly that by 1805 Lancaster was nearly overwhelmed by debt. Five other Quakers then came to his assistance, and his venture was converted into *The British and Foreign Schools Society*. The undenominational teaching of these schools alarmed the Church, and shortly afterwards was established *The National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church*.

Committee on Education in 1837 had to report that no authoritative returns to Parliament as to the instruction given to children of the working classes were in existence, nor was there any material adequate for making such returns. The Commissioners of 1837 went on to speak of the inadequacy of the Dame and common Day Schools, owing to their teachers' ignorance, want of books, and bad buildings. "One of the best of these schools," said an inspector, "is kept by a blind man; he is, however, liable to interruption, as his wife keeps a mangle and he has to turn it for her. The teachers, generally speaking, are totally unqualified: very few, if any, have ever had any education for the purpose. A great proportion of them have undertaken it in consequence of distress, and also because they are getting too old for anything else. The masters and mistresses are generally obliged to follow some other occupation for a living. In one instance a woman was washing while she was teaching the children." It was from schools of this kind, for the most part, that our Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire children went to work in the fields at the ages of six and seven. A Dame

keeping school at Finstock in the year 1850, was asked what subjects she taught to her scholars. "The Belief and the Commandments, and them little things," was her reply to her questioner.

Then the whole matter of dress that would be worn, how vague and confused are our ideas as to the dates of different old fashions! I have had the good fortune to be shown a dress worn at the Fair of 1840. It is of lemon-coloured satin, its bodice sloping off very much at the shoulders, and minute at the waist (1830 to 1840 was the worst of all English periods of tight lacing); the sleeves are huge from shoulder to elbow, but close at the wrist; the skirt is immensely wide, made up of eight widths of the satin. Worn with the dress was a small "pelerine" matching it, and a lemon-coloured satin bonnet, lined with lilac velvet and trimmed with gauze ribbon and lilac flowers. This stands much off the face and has a helmet-shaped crown. Its wearer's hair was parted on the forehead and "disposed" in light curls that hung low at the sides. Her small brothers were arrayed in green coats, white waistcoats, nankeen trousers, large turned-down frilled collars, white stockings, and pumps.

Her little sisters wore, out of doors just as much as in, low-necked and short-sleeved dresses; below their skirts white frilled trousers and white socks appeared. Cottons and washing materials for children by this time had come into use; but that they had only recently done so is recalled to us by Mrs. Fairchild, who reminds Lucy and Emily that there was no washing of soiled frocks in her youthful days. Some of the working women, too, would be wearing print dresses; but the majority of them would be in alpacas and cashmeres, with checked shawls crossed over their breasts. Labourers and the working farmers would be in white linen smocks with kerseymere trousers tucked, below the knee, into buttoned leather gaiters. For sports of any kind, as for many sorts of field work, these smocks would be caught up about the waist exactly as a Blue Coat boy catches his skirt up to-day.

From two days before the Fair every available nook and cranny in Charlbury was filled. An army of entertainers, as well as those to be entertained, had to be housed; for there were "Wild West Shows," "Travelling Theatres," "Atkins and Womwell Menageries," "Monsieur

Columbier and his French Company with Fireworks," and last, but not least, " the Vauxhall dancing saloon, with harps and violins, lit up at night with hundreds of lamps, and retailing its famous sandwiches at thirty shillings a lb."[1] Music of kinds must have been plentiful; for almost all the shows and booths had their gongs: many local fiddlers and one or two clarionet players were present; and the Charlbury Yeomanry Band performed from Lord Churchill's boat on the lake. Dancing was general and—the fact is on record, and I have it from eyewitnesses too—on the whole very good. To the manners of the populace, apart from those of any criminals present, many objections might be made. We may note, however, in passing, that the general behaviour had improved immensely from what it had been at the beginning of the century, in the great days of the Burford Races, for instance,[2] even though it differed very

[1] Information given by Mr. Jesse Clifford, Charlbury British schoolmaster 1842 to 1884.

[2] Burford Races, though of first-rate importance in their day, and bringing the Prince Regent to Burford, hardly come into the period I am writing of. Their zenith was at the close of the eighteenth century. Half-column advertisements of them signed by the Marquis of Worcester and the Marquis of Blandford appear in *The Gloucester Gazette* of 1792.

widely from the demeanour of to-day.[1] An *Oxford Journal* reporter, indeed, in regard to a Burford Fair about this time, makes a statement that is very remarkable. Congratulating the local constables and the general public upon their efforts in support of good order, he writes: "We did not see a single thief or pickpocket throughout the day or evening of the Fair. When nearly £20,000 are brought, as in this week, and laid out in one place, every protection should be afforded the parties in their various transactions."[2] And how real a task keeping order must have been in a Fair of these proportions, held in the street of a small country town, we may gather from an incident somewhat earlier in date which had decided the succession to one of the finest old homes in our piece of country. Attending a Chipping Norton Fair in 1812, Arthur Jones, of Chastleton House, had found himself hailed by a gentleman from the window of

[1] It should, I think, be noted in this connection that the case for out-of-door places of amusement in villages and country towns to-day is very much strengthened by the fact that rustic civilization has reached a point now at which little or no policing would be necessary. Offences of any grave kind would be quite adequately dealt with by the general community.

[2] *The Oxford Journal*, 1 October, 1836.

a post-chaise which was so blocked in the mass of people that its driver had given up all hope of being able to proceed. "You, I am sure, are Jones of Chastleton," said the voice from the window. "I am William Whitmore, of Dudmaston; we are posting home from Teignmouth and have got entangled in this crowd." Arthur Jones contrived to extricate the chaise to the point of having it turned back to his house at Chastleton. So well pleased was he with the occupants that he persuaded them to stay with him for some days, and shortly after their departure he and his brother wrote proposing to settle Chastleton House on their boy, John Whitmore. The offer was accepted, and the present owner of Chastleton, Miss Whitmore Jones, is the granddaughter of the gentleman who cried out upon the methods and manners of Fairs from the post-chaise window.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MIDDLE OF THE CENTURY

WE come here to a time well within the memory of a number of persons now living, yet it is strangely unlike our own. Much that has been remarked of 1840–50 applies to 1850–60; for, though the Corn Duty had been taken off, the outbreak of the Crimean war[1] kept up prices in every direction. The summer of 1854 was a glorious one lasting from May to October.[2] But in the following January, 1855, set in that weather which has come to be known as "the Crimean Frost," and it was unbroken from early January until late in March. The distresses of this winter were great; the changed Poor Law seemed pressing more cruelly than ever.[3] Half-farthings, which had first been coined in the 'forties, were current; for labouring people everywhere

[1] 1854. [2] It brought a plague of wasps.

[3] Cf. as well as the local newspapers, *The Household Narrative of Current Events*, 1850–1856.

were existing on pittances, seven shillings a week for fathers of eight and nine children being a quite common wage. Distress at this time was worst in the towns; yet in the country work was exceedingly scarce; people thankfully tramped fifty, and even a hundred, miles for harvesting, and lived on till next spring in the place where they did it, though no jobs were obtainable in the interval.[1] Gangs of men were indeed being employed all about England in railroad making, but the wages of these, though comparatively good, were often halved and more than halved by the tyranny of the Tommy-shop, which, spite of the Truck Act of 1831, till the 'seventies remained in existence.[2] Charitable efforts of many kinds were on foot, and Ragged Schools were coming much to the fore, yet the supply of pickpockets of nine, eight, and even seven years of age definitely

[1] "We went on to Oxford, where I started to work for about two months, and stopped all the winter at Moreton-in-the-Marsh. There was no work to be got (in the winter) but we made enough in the harvest to keep us through it." *The Autobiography of a Working Man*, reprinted from *Macmillan's Magazine* by Bentley in 1862, p. 41.

[2] "In 1847 I was working where the ganger kept a Tommy-shop. We had to go there on Saturday night to get our money, and it was often three on Sunday morning before we could get paid." *Ibid.*, pp. 62–63.

trained, according to the police reports, in "the thieves' kitchen" was immense; and these, with the very considerable number of child murderers, were committed still to the common prisons. Decencies of life, as we know them to-day, were luxuries for the well-to-do only.[1] Street manners and language alike were coarse in the extreme; the talk of the crowd that assembled at the Old Bailey in January, 1855, to see Barthelemy hanged, shocked even contemporary witnesses to an extent that more than one of them has placed upon record.

None the less there are working people in our district who look back to life at this time, in villages such as Taynton or Barrington, as to an El Dorado. At Barrington Park, for instance, the five Misses Rice took responsibility for their villagers seriously enough. My curtains and chair-covers to-day bear witness to the excellence of the needlework they personally taught. One of the ladies was in their Barrington school every morning, and, if any Taynton child should be absent, one or other of them before nightfall would have covered the mile

[1] *The Autobiography of a Working Man*, reprinted from *Macmillan's Magazine* by Bentley in 1862, p. 40.

and a half, each way, between the villages, to be informed of the reason. Sixty years have gone by, yet three of these ladies' birthdays remain red-letter days in their old pupils' calendars. "Why three?" I ask, "since the ladies were five?" The answer is that two of the birthdays fell in the winter. On the summer anniversaries the village children were taken to walk round the park! There is something about this reminiscence—its fragility, so meagre a treat producing so full-bodied an ecstasy—that preserves a real aroma from a world that is gone, a world in which a few squires represented still "the grand old Egoism that aforetime built the House," and administered every detail of their villages. But the excellence of such administration was usually in direct proportion to its rigidity. Communities of this kind had no place for strangers, and still less for inhabitants who wished to wander or seek changes in their situations. The elder Misses Rice, who made nothing of dismissing their younger sister, of sixty, to her bedroom whenever her conduct displeased them, would have given short shrift to such folk! Moreover, however beneficent, in certain respects, rulers

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of this kind may have been, their day in the majority of cases was ended already. Historians of the Free Trade movement and biographers of Free Trade heroes have a tendency to speak as though the landowners and the trading middle classes could, at this time, be opposed to each other. Well before the Anti-Corn Law campaign began English society was complicated beyond the possibility of any such simple division.[1] From the days of Queen Anne men

[1] In 1832 it had been remarked: "Forty years ago there were five packs of foxhounds and ten packs of harriers kept within ten miles of Newbury; now there is one of the former (kept, too, by subscription) and none of the latter. 'So much the better,' says the shallow fool who cannot estimate the difference between a resident native gentry, attached to the soil, known to every farmer and labourer from their childhood, frequently mixing with them in those pursuits where all artificial distinctions are lost, practising hospitality without ceremony, from habit and not on calculation; and a gentry only now and then residing at all, having no relish for country delights, foreign in their manners, distant and haughty in their behaviour, looking to the soil only for its rents, viewing it as a mere object of speculation, unacquainted with its cultivators, despising them and their pursuits. The war and paper system has brought in Nabobs, negro-drivers, generals, admirals, governors, commissaries, contractors, pensioners, sinecurists, commissioners, loan-jobbers, lottery dealers, bankers, stock-jobbers, not to mention the long and black list in gowns and three-tailed wigs. You can see but few good houses not in the possession of one or other of these." *Rural Rides*, Cobbett, p. 46. "The commonalty said, 'There never were so many Gentlemen and so little Gentleness.'" Motto prefixed by Disraeli to *Sybil*.

of the middle class, in one generation, had been becoming aristocrats in the next. Commercial and professional persons who bought estates passed almost at once—that indeed was their object—out of the body of their class; they became "landlords." Yet their incursion, in so large a proportion, into the land-owning class at the beginning of the nineteenth century, ought to make it impossible to speak of the landlords of 1846 as though they were representative of the feudal aristocracy. Had they been so, the "Young England" party would never have come into existence; neither would there have been the truth there is in the words Mr. Chesterton has put into the mouth of the English labourer after the battle of Waterloo:

"Our patch of glory ended; we never heard guns again.
But the squire seemed struck in the saddle; he was foolish, as if in pain.
He leaned on a staggering lawyer, he clutched a cringing Jew.
He was stricken; it may be, after all, he was stricken at Waterloo.
Or perhaps the shades of the shaven men, whose spoil is in his house,
Came back in shining shapes at last to spoil his last carouse:

We only know the last sad squires ride slowly towards the sea,
And a new people takes the land: and still it is not we.

They have given us into the hand of the new unhappy lords,
Lords without anger and honour, who dare not carry their swords.
They fight by shuffling papers: they have bright dead alien eyes;
They look at our labour and laughter as a tired man looks at flies.
And the load of their loveless pity is worse than the ancient wrongs;
Their doors are shut in the evening; and they know no songs."

The woman who tells me most of the life in those days at Barrington has a memory which supports the statement repeatedly made to me that the most remarkable change in the appearance of villages, within the last sixty years, is the light after dark in every house to-day where there used to be blackness. She recalls her family's vivid excitement over the first lamp they ever had seen when her father brought it home because her mother's eyes were failing from sewing by rushlight—the whole household, she says, "were scared to death o' the thing." Her father could afford a luxury of this sort

occasionally, because he was "Vicar's man" and not a mere labourer; yet his daughter remembers well her ecstasy at the first piece of gold she, or her neighbours, ever set eyes on. It was her payment at the end of a year in which she had fetched the Taynton Vicar's letters daily from Burford.

Village postal arrangements in those days were extraordinarily primitive. The penny post had of course come into existence, and something of what it meant to the poor has been made real to me by the narrative of an old man at Bourton-on-the-Water who held a thanksgiving service of his own the day the penny post came into force,[1] because he thought he might then fairly engage himself to a girl living in Bristol with whom, at the old price of postage, he could not have kept up communication. But for the increased number of letters the new rate brought about, in small places at all events, there was not at first much arrangement. In the little town of Charlbury, for instance, sixty years ago all the letters were delivered by an old shoemaker at a salary of 1s. 6d. a week. This sum was paid to him by

[1] January 10th, 1840. Appendix, p. 273.

the Charlbury postmistress, whose own salary (out of which she had to provide for the delivery of letters) was 5s. There were six deliveries of letters a week; and the entire post-office staff was the postmistress, who gave a quarter of her time, and the shoemaker, who gave an eighth of his, to postal work. All letters came to the place then directed "Charlbury near Enstone"; and they were brought down from Enstone in a cart drawn by dogs. None of the postmen in country places at that time wore any sort of official costume; and the most striking feature, I am told by people who remember it, of letter delivery in those days was its haphazard method. Letters would constantly be placed in tiny children's hands for delivery to their parents or even to neighbours. Village postmen often enough could not read; they grew to recognize the shapes of names most often on letters, and, for the rest, they would ask for instruction at the larger houses on their rounds.

All classes of country people went to bed early in those days. Artificial lighting, even among the well-to-do, was a very different matter from what it is to-day. Gas was a good

deal in use in towns ; but it was a year or two later than 1850 that a guest in my grandfather's house almost lost his life because, on getting into bed, he had blown out the jet in his room. When Queen Victoria went in state to the Guildhall at the opening of the Great Exhibition, in 1851, the Fleet Street illuminations were all coloured oil lamps ; and festival illuminations in places the size of Oxford still took very largely the form of candles set one in each of the small panes of the windows. I have spoken already of the pleasure afforded by the lights on the Vauxhall Dancing Saloon at Wychwood Fair ; and in all advertisements of public entertainments of the time great emphasis is laid on arrangements for lighting. Darkness was so prevalent that, to the poor at least, illumination was among the greatest of luxuries. In all talk with simple old people about the Exhibition of 1851 it will be found that the fireworks and the lighted fountains stay most in their memories. This is not surprising when we remember what getting a light in a cottage in those days involved. In the first place, burnt rag enough had to be put in the tinder-box overnight ; then in the morning flint and steel had to be struck till sparks from

them ignited the rag; after that the rag had to be blown (for a quarter of an hour often) till it was flaming enough to set fire to the end of a brimstone match thrust into it; finally from the brimstone match the dip candle was lit. And, for half the year at least, people in the country got up in the dark. Another change our old people are very fond of noting is the stillness of village mornings to-day. In their youth, people used to be starting out at three in the morning with much cracking of whips, blowing of horns, and lumbering of wagons. As a matter of fact, traffic, even in large towns, is less noisy now than it used to be. The present Dean of Canterbury had repeatedly told me that the London of his youth—sixty years ago—was much noisier than the London of to-day; but I never realized the truth of his assertion till I had the experience of trying to sleep on the north side of Lincoln's Inn when the Benchers were giving a ball. The jar and racket was such that I really half wondered whether war of some sort had broken out; for the only noise I had ever known to compare with it had been ammunition wagons on the move. The din was caused by the wheels and iron props of hansoms

going over cobbles; and in the London of 1850–60 cobbles had been everywhere. There was a great deal more street porterage in those days too—including wooden sledges that drew beer casks—than there is to-day. Foot-passengers were thicker also; my father always has told me that on the first day of the 1851 Exhibition people were more crowded on the streets of London than he has ever seen them since. Not only are the roads very much widened now, but a large part of the population is always in tunnels and tubes.

Mr. T. E. Kebbell, who spent the autumn of 1851 with a brother, then curate-in-charge for the Vicar of Sarsden, and who heard much of the parishioners' memories of Warren Hastings's sweetness of disposition,[1] reminds us that this was a day when clergymen preached in black gowns, gentlemen went out to dinner in flowered waterfall neckcloths fastened with gorgeous pins (the dinner hour in country places was six o'clock) and were expected to sit over their port wine and claret for an hour and a half, at least, after the ladies had left them. A few

[1] Sarsden is about a mile from Warren Hastings's home at Daylesford.

elderly gentlewomen appeared still in turbans, and a larger number wore black velvet bands across their foreheads. At parties in small country places dancing was less than it had been; entertainment at this time consisted largely of the singing of songs by Felicia Hemans and whist playing in the light of candles that required snuffing between every deal. (The art of candle snuffing was one in which gentlemen of the day needed to be proficient.) Among daylight pastimes archery was the favourite, and comic prints of the time were fond of picturing ladies' darts penetrating the legs of bystanders. It was a world that, apparently, saw nothing to smile at in the newspaper notice: "The Queen has introduced the custom of paying all tradesmen's bills every three months, instead of allowing them to run on for an indefinite time. The fashion, it is said, is to be followed by a number of the aristocracy."[1] Yet many of the matters the time did consider funny we should not think so to-day. Horseplay was allowable; and, except in the most serious-minded of circles, practical joking was thoroughly fashion-

[1] *The Household Narrative of Current Events*, 1851.

able. An authority upon social customs and manners at Queen Victoria's accession tells of young men not uncommonly amusing themselves by administering violently medicated sweets to their companions and partners at dances.[1] Late eighteenth and early nineteenth century *Jest* and *Anecdote books*, which we should consider indecent, were still being sold largely for family reading. In harmless witticisms also, the level was one which hardly appeals to our taste. As late as 1872 we find these three jokes, consecutively, representing a leading weekly journal's cullings from the wit and wisdom of the time : " Mrs. Malaprop, hearing that the centaur who educated Achilles was half man and half horse, wants to know whether the discentaurs, who are trying their best to make Christian education impossible, are half man and half ass " ; " What is better than presence of mind in a railway accident ? Why, to be altogether absent " ; " The difference between a box of matches and my mother's sister riding on a donkey is this—One is Bryant and May and the other My A'nt and Bray."

Funeral customs, too, were of a kind now

[1] Sir Walter Besant.

almost forgotten. At the death of well-to-do persons hired mutes stood each side of the house doorway until the funeral, while the family escutcheon hung out from the windows over their heads. When influenza had been at its worst in 1840 (in 1850 it was still rife in a more fatal form than any known to us now) "funeral processions," we are told, "might be seen proceeding in every direction to the burial places in and around London, presenting an extraordinary appearance, the undertakers not being able to keep up with the demand for mourning cloaks." During such epidemics people were buried with a haste that accounts for the huddled and ineffective disposal of coffins found in our churchyards to-day. The undertakers reaped a rich harvest, and sanitation was not yet in existence. In villages and small towns epidemics such as scarlet fever, measles, diphtheria were constant; cholera and smallpox,[1] though less common, were not infrequent. Not till the disastrous outbreak of cholera in 1861 was the first Sanitary Commission appointed; "London still drained into the

[1] In 1851 deaths from smallpox in England were twenty-five per thousand.

Thames, which was one gigantic sewer, washed back and forward by the tide";[1] open ditches of sewerage ran along the streets of our towns.

Travelling, among persons of the upper and middle classes, was much on the increase. All over England railways were being projected, and those that had first been completed were in a thriving condition.[2] Many guards and drivers of the old mail coaches had become engine drivers. Some had been made masters at small stations, and complained bitterly of their loneliness. They missed, they said, the bustle and companionship of the roads; for many of the smaller stations then were as desolate as the coaching centres were in our youth. We speak often in these parts of the railway having "left" such and such a town "on one side." This means, of course, that a number of our country stations were at first planted in the wilds. Disasters were inevitable perhaps in the introduction of so new a system; but in these early years there were very many of them—"railway accidents," writes an editor

[1] *The Progress of the Nation*, Porter, p. 9.

[2] My father's father, and his brother, who had each bought ten £100 shares at the opening of the Manchester and Liverpool Railway, sold them in 1852 for double what they had cost.

in 1852,[1] "have become a regular article of intelligence," and there seems hardly a monthly, or even a weekly, of the time that has not one or more to record. Humble people were slower than well-to-do ones in taking to railways; the arrangements made for them were certainly not very enticing; a popular song of the 'fifties concerned the "Pig-pens Open and Free" that were offered to third-class passengers. The Great Western line from London to Worcester was, of course, owing to the determined opposition of Eton College and Oxford University authorities, one of the latest in construction. Our portion of it was not opened until 1852, and on 21 July, 1851, its tunnel near Chipping Campden was the scene of a battle; the struggle, for possession of it, being between five hundred men of one contractor and two hundred belonging to another, and so sharp that, after it, for a fortnight work on the line was suspended.

Mops or hiring fairs were the chief mediums still for obtaining both men- and maid-servants. On the day of Burford Fair, for instance, every

[1] Charles Dickens in *The Household Narrative of Current Events*, October, 1852.

servant in the district regarded himself or herself as "free from servitude"—curiously enough that was the labourer's expression—for that one day in the year. The carter stood in the street where the fair was held with a piece of whipcord in his hat, the cowman with a strand of cowhair in his, the milkmaid with a bunch of cowhair in the bosom of her dress, the housemaid with a mop, and so on. "The fasten penny"—the name for the shilling given by the employer and accepted by the employed at the moment of engagement—was no empty symbol at this date. In *The Oxford Journal* we read: "William Cummins, who had neglected to perform a contract entered into by him to mow some grass, was committed to prison for seven days. The man's object in refusing to fulfil his agreement was to obtain a trifle more wages offered by another master. It cannot be too generally known that an agreement between master and servant for a short period is as binding as a hiring for a year."[1] Children still went to work in the fields, as ploughboys or scaring birds, at six and seven years of age. Education, for another quarter of

[1] There are still quite a number of old persons in our villages who believe that the taking of the shilling binds the taker legally for a year.

OUTSIDE MR. ARTHUR GIBBS'S HOME AT ABLINGTON

a century, was not to be compulsory. Many children escaped it altogether, and, for those who did receive it, it often was hardly worth having; Dame schools were still very general, and the Parliamentary Report on the teaching in these I have quoted in the last chapter. Yet when all on that score is said, there remains another side to the matter. A number of the most wide-awake and intelligent of the working men in our district to-day never had more instruction than a night-school could give them; and there are hedgers and ditchers and thatchers and shepherds of seventy who had no schooling at all, and yet are not to be caught out in complicated reckonings.[1] Again, I was asked a few days ago to decipher the word "ardlynuff," in what I took at first sight for German characters, written for my interlocutor (who is deaf) by a lad of fourteen fresh from the Board-school in reply to his question as to whether a payment was satisfactory!

A real, and to my mind a very entertaining, picture of the mental gulf between these days and ours is to be found in the details of the Great Exhibition. In the list of the unclaimed articles left in the hands of the police after the

[1] Delightful stories of old men of this kind are told in *A Cotswold Village*—the first and best of books about Cotswold people, by the late Arthur Gibbs.

day of opening—among them "two hundred and seventy-five shawl brooches and clasps, sixty-nine shawl pins, thirty-one reticules, fourteen victorines, and eight bonnet shades"—we have vivid reminders of changes; but it is in the matter of objects for sale at the Exhibition that the difference seems to grow widest. Articles of every sort and kind were stamped with Queen Victoria's likeness; she was "modelled in sugar, and moulded in clay, cast in metal, and carved in wood, painted on handkerchiefs, worked in wool, embroidered in silk, enamelled in china, painted on glass, baked in porcelain, melted in wax, and sculptured in soap." These things were eagerly bought by what cannot but seem to our eyes a somewhat unsophisticated public—the same public that perceived the dawn of universal peace in the fact that the Duke of Wellington and Richard Cobden walked beside one another through the Crystal Palace. The name for that unlovely edifice, and all the high-flown writing about it—*The Times* on the day of its opening published a poem of Thackeray's calling it

> "A palace fit for Fairy Prince,
> A rare pavilion such as man
> Saw never since mankind began."

—make very clear differences in taste between ourselves and the people who reared it. Newspapers of the time were filled, first, with plans for its construction, and then with the details of its achievement. From all parts of England workmen went up to help in building what they called "the New 'Bition," and among them men had been drawn from this district. With two of these I have talked, and I am struck by how much their memories of the event are like those of more educated people. In sentiment, the mind of the country at this time seems to have been much of a piece. While these old men ramble on about the great day and the appearance of the Queen, *The Times's* account[1] sounds in my ears,—"The moral grandeur of yesterday's spectacle raises it far beyond the level of pageants, and with the recollection full upon us we hardly find courage to enter on a description. Words are powerless in the presence of that vast muster of worldly magnificence, that stupendous act of homage to industry and the peaceful arts. . . . Many were reminded of the day when all ages and climes shall be gathered round the throne of their

[1] 2 May, 1851.

Maker." The Duke of Wellington (the day was his eighty-second birthday) walked and talked "in the face of all nations." The Queen wore "a robe of pink watered silk," and "satisfied utterly the hearts and eyes of her people." Knowing as we do now how closely the Crimean war was impending, this event that in 1851 engrossed England is apt, even in its ethical aspect, to appear to us slightly ridiculous. We find ourselves reminded of George Meredith's view that we bungled into that war, because we had been so immersed in "gigantic nonsense of the everlastingness of the exchange of fruits for money, with angels waving raw groceries of Eden for joy of the commercial picture." The ideals abroad in 1850 undoubtedly were, as Disraeli and "Young England" believed them to be, more or less those of a manufacturer's paradise. Earlier chapters of this book, however, will have been very much at fault if they have not reminded us that for the first half of the century decent food to eat and clothes to wear had been an impossibility for the mass of the labouring people either in the town or the country. After the repeal of the Corn Laws the conditions in the towns could never again be so

bad; wages rose and trade enormously increased. Whether or no the country districts entered too little into the calculations of the reformers is a question not yet decided.

The chief value, perhaps, in attempting to get a real imaginative grip of the England of this date is the fact that it formed the stuff out of which our present colonies have been made. In skeleton, they had, of course, existed previously; but from this period the life-blood of Australia and Canada, as they now are, was drawn.[1] In the 'fifties, after transportation was stopped, New South Wales made immense, and on the whole successful, efforts to attract free English labour; the rush to the South Australian goldfields set in about the same time;[2] while emigration to Canada came into quite a new prominence.[3] In fact, I very much doubt

[1] The United States had been established by a different time and temper, as well as a rather different kind of Englishman. Similar, and even superior, families had at first gone to up-country stations in Australia; but these were a handful merely in comparison with the convict and, later, free labourer population. The proportion of these earlier settlers remains greater, of course, in New Zealand.

[2] The arrivals at Melbourne from Europe in 1852 averaged two thousand a week.

[3] Among the most painful newspaper items of 1850–56 are details of exposures of the many bogus emigration agencies that had sprung into being.

whether to any of my own generation, except a few historians possibly, these days can be real at all unless they have heard them talked about in the colonies. And that talk will afford the normal Englishman a considerable shock. He will learn what colonial self-satisfaction, which at first sight is as puzzling as it is unlovely, grounds itself on. An old woman in an Australian mining town made this very clear to me. I had looked with bewilderment on the shanties the workers were living in there, and racked my brains to imagine in what respect their inhabitants could suppose they had bettered the old-world conditions. Through this woman's speech I learned that the England of her memory and the England I knew were quite different places. She spoke, I saw with humiliation, in complete disbelief that they had changed, of conditions she had experienced. Apprenticed to a cruel master, almost from babyhood she had laboured in the fields from daylight to dark. Starvation and hideous language had been everywhere about her. As to pleasures, she did not remember talk of any, except going to see hangings, and she was not among the leisured children taken to these. A brave and sunny

soul, she spoke without bitterness, even with a sort of sentimental affection for the old country ; but she felt herself to be stating facts no one could gainsay, which made almost any kind of life anywhere better than what was open to poor people in England. I do not, of course, mean to suggest—what I have said of Taynton and Barrington, for instance, should make that very clear—that the life of every working person in England in the 'fifties was similar to the lot of this woman. The respectable Englishman's prejudice against a convict settlement was naturally great, and, for some years after transportation ceased, it was chiefly those among free labourers whose conditions at home were so bad they could not be worse anywhere else who were persuaded to go to Australia. My point rather is that an experience such as this New South Wales woman described was general among the thousands who in the middle of the century left England for the colonies. An Australian servant-girl, when I expostulated with her for insanitary habits, told me her mother said every miner's family in England lived and slept in one room !

CHAPTER IX

SOME POSSESSORS OF THESE MEMORIES

IF I were to attempt to describe the characters of many of the persons who have shared their memories with me, I should require the whole space of a book. I should not, indeed, know where to begin such a tale, whether with the loungers and ne'er-do-weels, or the labourers who throve on seven shillings a week; the established tradesmen, or the persons, characteristic of a district like this, who sometimes work as masters and sometimes as day labourers for other men.[1] One of this last class it is who, of all the Cotswold people I have talked with, comes oftenest perhaps to my mind. Through his youth and middle life he used commonly to walk, after a day's labour, the six miles from his home to Woodstock, and the six miles back again, in order to spend the hours from eight o'clock to ten in a place where Chaucer had dwelt. He is almost stone deaf, and over sixty

[1] See Appendix, p. 281.

now ; but he travels through all parts of the district in the early autumn days gathering apple crops by contract and quoting Omar Khayyám to farm wives in the kitchens. The kindliest of souls, his mellow outlook upon life is connected indissolubly in my mind with russet fruits and September afternoons. On one such glowing day I did indeed see his face overcast. That was because his beloved poem had made him careless of a woman's feeling. She had been complaining of the dull simplicity of her farm-wife routine, and he had responded with :

> "A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
> A jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread——"

and had reached the end of the second line, and the beginning of the third, too soon to check himself by intuition of the real want the words were to show him in her face. I did not hear, no one would hear from him, who the woman was ; I only know that what he felt his unforgivable clumsiness weighed on him for days. He is nothing of a sentimentalist though. Married forty-three years, he has supported his full share of family anxieties and sickness ; his son has lately been at death's door ; his wife,

towards whom he bears himself as a young lover still,[1] is visibly failing. He does not blink these, or any other, uncomfortable truths. He only asserts, simply and unwaveringly, that, whatever may now be ahead, his time upon earth has been glorious; no ills weighing on the few years to come can, by any possibility, outbalance the joy he has felt in existence.

I do not put this man forward as representative of his class. That would be ridiculous; his mental keenness is quite exceptional. Yet the longer one lives in the Cotswolds, the less one inclines to speak, or to write, of persons as typical. The old people, at any rate, are so much individuals, and so full of personal flavour. To go shopping in a place like Burford is not at all necessarily to get what you want, certainly not to get it with swiftness; but it is to negotiate with persons of dignity and ruminating character—persons of resource too. Behind our ironmonger's unpretending frontage lurks a most efficient working array of machine tools; we buy drugs at our chemist's to an organ accompaniment; the Burford postmaster is

[1] See Appendix, p. 282, for a poem he wrote to her this year on the occasion of buying her a new wedding-ring.

motor proprietor, chauffeur, and photographer.[1] And it is not the men alone who possess dignity and character. One elderly tradesman tells a tale that delights me in connection with an oil portrait of his grandmother that hangs on his wall. She is wearing a monumental cap decorated with artificial fruits and flowers, and by this hangs the story. A good manager, she had never been troubled by her husband for details of household or personal expenditure. He had accepted her caps as a matter of course, until one day he came by accident on the bill, of a guinea, for this one. Thereupon he fell into a rage, declaring that no such extravagance should be allowed in a house where he was master. Very well, his wife had replied, but if she could not wear the quality of caps that befitted her, she would not wear any. And to this resolution she held for the remainder of her life, spite of all her husband's solicitations to the contrary. "And so," her son comments in telling the story, "I learned to let well alone; specially where a woman comes into the question."

[1] Three of the illustrations in this book are from photographs taken by him.

Of the working men many, perhaps most, of the old ones have had to toil too hard for their living. Yet they are not, certainly, crushed in spirit. I put down my pen just as I had written that last sentence to go to pay a labourer seventy-three years of age for cutting way-side grass at our door. As usual, he greeted me with a proud survey of his work, and the phrase : "It's no good getting young ones for jobs o' this sort." Then there is the old scissors grinder who goes the round of the villages and is famed for his Radical replies to Conservative argument. He it was who retorted to a young Tory squire, who at the time of the institution of Old Age Pensions taunted the old man as to the source from which he supposed money for them would be forthcoming, "Thic feyther hevs a pension, dwont 'er ? Oi reckons noaw mine ma' coom oot o' the same box as his'n." On a humbler level still there is the old pensioner of friends of mine who strove so long against the desire of his village authorities to move him to the workhouse infirmary on the ground of the great store he set by his "furniture." This was practically worthless, but no one dreamed, even had anyone been brutal enough to essay the

task, of being able to prove the fact to him. Yet when, after two years of discussion, he was being moved off at last, and a friendly voice from the neighbours round his door called out to him: "We'll see they don't take thy £5 worth, Harry," he chucklingly responded, "An thur did, thur'd ha' ter bring £4 19s. 6d. in their pockuts." Less incisive in speech, but of a no less stubborn independence, is a labourer of seventy-six for whom not long ago I filled in an Old Age Pension claim, who is living now in a house in which his father and his father's father were born. Forty years ago he refused an offer, urged on him three separate times, to take work in Birmingham at double the wages he was receiving in Oxfordshire, with the simple rejoinder, "I couldna' go fur ta brea-ak up ma home." From that time to this he has walked four miles a day to and from his field labour, taking always tea to his wife's bedside before he starts out in the morning. I have met him on his way at most seasons of the year; but whatever the weather he refuses to allow me to condole with him. "Hard?" he says, "hard? Why, folks nowadays dwon't know what hard times be." In this view, that the

labourer's lot has improved very much of late years, all our old men are agreed. Many of them complain that the softened conditions have destroyed character; but as to the softening of the conditions, no two opinions exist.

Happily, because our peasants on the whole are unspoiled, it is not easy for persons of another class to overhear their most pungent sayings. A few, however, came to my ears when I lodged for a time in the house of a local cartage agent—a man of little specific education, but of fine and humorous feeling and of so large a charity as to be the helper and confidant of most of the ne'er-do-weels in his district. He told my landlady one day, and my landlady told me, that that morning he and his wagon had come on one of these loungers and been questioned by him as to the identity of a much-bedecked damsel who was stepping along in the distance. She, after some cogitation, was discovered to be a daughter of the village blacksmith. "Well, well!" ejaculated the old lounger, "them thur feythers be the ruination o' this country; and," after a pause he added, "yur shud a' seen Allus yesterday, 'er 'ad more feythers in thic

thur 'at of 'ers than poor ——" (naming the wealthy game-preserving lord of the manor) "'as in all 'is pheasunts!" That use of "poor"—a good deal as a schoolboy uses the term "old"—is highly characteristic. It shows that no malice, something indeed nearer to affection is meant; at the same time it pretends to patronize. It plays at getting even with the person who might be thinking himself your superior, or rather, with the persons whose servants think themselves your superiors; for you have considerably more than a suspicion that to be a gentleman is not to fancy yourself overmuch, at the same time that it renders you delightfully independent of other people's opinions. "Oh, I'd like to be Lord ——," a working man I was talking with broke out to me lately. "Would you, why ever?" I questioned in considerable surprise, certain I should be given no vulgar or foolish reply. "Because a person like him doesn't have to truckle to anybody," my acquaintance responded; "he can be himself, always, just as straight as he likes. And that's what a man earning weekly wages hardly ever can be." "Like so and so?" I questioned, mentioning a person who would

look on himself as a magnate of his neighbourhood, curious to see whether it was by accident that in Lord —— a cosmopolitan person of charming manners, as well as a man of ancient family, had been chosen. "No," with a quick look at me under the eyelids and a half twinkle, the working man said, "not like him. The porters at our station call him The Blusterer. He belongs to gentry, but his manners have been spoiled just the way ours have. You see, he's in debt to the shopkeepers, and he shouts at us all a bit, for fear that we'll have it in mind."

Among the very old men there are left a few of the musicians of sorts common in our villages fifty years ago. Fiddlers of rival villages at that time were much extolled; though a sidelight is thrown upon the nature of some of the appreciation they excited by the local saw that the fiddle says "ut freezes, ut freezes," while the trombone replies "ut wunt, ut wunt." A few, too, of the greybeards still echo their father's loud disapproval of a change having been made in the calendar. The seasons, they tell you, the birds and the flowers will have "Nowt to do wi' ut"; Christmas Day weather is on 6 January, and the swallows come and

go by the old dates, and (this is particularly interesting as a reminder of the number of pre-reformation traditions enduring in these parts) "the fluer dwoun in Soomerset"[1] refuses to bloom in December.

Writing of these persons brings to mind vividly situations in which I have talked with them. One of these is a spot where (spite of all Kingsley explains to the contrary) I feel always that Tom must have gone down to the Water Babies. It is the bend of the river just beyond the church at Upper Slaughter—a place where you press out the scents of wild mint and thyme as you lie on the bank to watch the ranunculus bobbing on the stream which here is shallow and of magical clearness. The only sounds that break on the bubbling of the water are the peeping of the moor-hens, and the wood-pigeons flapping like wet cloths in a wind. I have talked a great deal with a labourer in this spot, and he and I have rejoiced together over the putting up of the cottages shown on the opposite page. They were erected six years ago for the landlord of the village by a firm of local builders—a firm famous throughout our country-

[1] The Glastonbury thorn.

side for its beautiful building. These particular cottages are entirely new. But my old friend holds strongly that a great deal more should be done than is being done in the restoration of old cottages. He and I have been delighted to find that a recent book[1] devotes a chapter to this subject. So much might be done in this direction, both to preserve the beauty of our villages and also to remove real reproach from a Government which, in giving large powers for condemning insanitary dwellings in rural areas without instituting constructive schemes to balance them, has laid itself sadly open to blame.

The subject of building recalls an interesting fact pointed out to me by another dweller in the district. He remarks that if war took place in this country, our modern road constructions would be found to have put us in a difficulty from which earlier centuries were free. Nowadays every road of importance, when it reaches a river or stream, crosses it by a bridge. But these roads follow the lines of old roads that led down to fords. That is to say, the road still leads to the spot which gave the best and

[1] *The Country Life Book of Cottages*, by Mr. Lawrence Weaver.

NEW COTTAGES, UPPER SLAUGHTER

shallowest crossing, the firmest bottom; but the effect of bridge building has been to confine the stream at these points, and the result is that the old bottom has been scoured away and the channel deepened. If the bridges were destroyed, the roads, instead of leading to the best places for crossing, would lead to the worst. Artillery and transport would be more difficult to move, in war, in England to-day than they were three hundred years ago. Cotswold stonemasons and quarrymen give delightful titles to the materials they work with. Pittaway—a surname curiously general in the village of Taynton—is believed to have been originally applied to some workman from the sound of his pickaxe chipping on the stone. The tiles for our roofs are called, according to their sizes, long wivets, long bachelors, short bachelors, longbecks, shortbecks, middle becks, muffities, long days, and short days. The old quarrymen at Stonesfield and elsewhere are among the most interesting of our people. The history of the Stonesfield industry, and what I rejoice to say begins to look like its revival, has yet to be written. Tiles are, alas! still being stripped from ancient houses and

barns for covering "artistic" new buildings, while a village of experts in their forefathers' craft of quarrying and preparing the tiles[1] have been unable to obtain employment and a fair wage. But, happily, an outcry is being raised against such vandalism, and the landlords who sell and the people who employ the old tiles are becoming marked persons among us.[2]

[1] After being quarried at Stonesfield, the pieces of stone are buried in earth mounds as potatoes are buried, but, unlike potatoes, they are uncovered hastily, by day or night, at the first touch of frost. Frost shales them into the thinness necessary for tiling.

[2] My difficulty in writing this chapter is that the things I want most to put I may not put in it; because they are private or intimate to persons now living. For instance, I want here, more than I can express, to pay tribute, by name, to a lover of the Cotswolds, far from rich, who in repeated instances has given to some small free-holder the difference in cost to have his cottage roofed again with stone instead of with the cheaper substitute of blue slate. A crystalline person, with an unaffected devotion to beauty, this man's action appears to himself as quite natural. How far it is the ordinary level of action may be judged by anyone who will stand to-day on the Hythe Bridge over the canal in Oxford, and regard what was lately the exquisite curve of cottage roofs (on the right facing the city). These cottages, which formed the setting of Burne Jones's *Dawn*, made up one of the loveliest pieces of Oxford. They have lately been devastated by the removal of their tiles and the substitution of a hideous new roofing of slate.

CHAPTER X

MOVEMENTS OF THE 'SEVENTIES

AS I begin upon this chapter the labourer who made the last payment that was made to the Oxfordshire branch of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union is cutting up wood in our coal-cellar. "You lost your money, then?" I say to him.[1] "Well, no," he responds, "for my wages was rose." Dr. Warde Fowler, too, has written: "After the coming of Joseph Arch and the Agricultural Labourers' Union, all kinds of rural labour was better paid."[2] An incontrovertible statement of the labourer's condition before the founding of the Union is given in the Report of the Royal

[1] The Union, after attempting financial impossibilities in the way of sick benefit, etc., had ultimately to be wound up.

[2] *Kingham Old and New*, p. 72. It may be asked why should I set forth so patent a truth by means of quotation? The answer is that in country districts like this there are no facts, established within the last hundred years, too obvious for someone to be found to deny them. Moreover, I have attempted throughout to keep personal opinion out of this book, and to make it a record of accredited facts.

Commission on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, set up in 1867. The Commission sat from 1868 to the end of 1870. It reported that the average wage of the Gloucestershire labourer was 9s. to 10s. a week, while in Oxfordshire the wages were 9s. to 11s. a week. In both counties there was extra pay in hay and harvest time. Much too was claimed by the employers as to the augmentation of wages by labourers' perquisites; but, with the exception of the cider allowance,[1] these, the Commissioners reported, could not be regarded in any estimation of wages, as they were altogether dependent upon the will of the employer. With regard to the 2s. 6d. to 3s. a day harvest wages, they noted too that harvesters at that time commonly worked from four in the morning till ten at night, and, on moonlight nights, until twelve. Within the

[1] Even this, the Commissioners reported, was overestimated (at 1s. a week in Gloucestershire), for farmers, they said, kept always two taps of cider; good cider worth about 30s. a hogshead for their own consumption, with a "second wringing" worth about 10s. a hogshead for the labourers. Fuel rights had degenerated till the roots obtained were usually more than paid for in the labour of grubbing them up. Grist rights too, according to the Report, were commonly worth less than nothing, the labourer often being obliged to accept field rakings at the price of good corn.

previous thirty years—that is, between 1840 and 1870—wages had undoubtedly risen even in low-wage parishes,[1] but from 1866 to 1872 provisions had been increasing so much in price as practically to reduce the labourer's income by 2s. a week. Shopkeepers, meanwhile, were making large profits. *Punch* and other English comic papers of 1871 and 1872, contain many gibes at the overfed and overdressed families of coal merchants and butchers who were parading the sands at Ramsgate and other "watering places." It was the excessive price of fresh meat at this date—

> "Sing a song of sixteen pence,
> Price of meat so high,
> Everybody's backward
> At buying steak for pie" [2]

—that first brought Australian tinned beef, corned beef, into vogue.

On 7 February, 1872, the Agricultural Labourers' Union was founded by Joseph Arch. Arch, who was a Warwickshire labourer of

[1] From an average of 8s. to an average of 10s.; but this rise, as Mr. Henley, M.P., reminded the Oxfordshire Agricultural Society at their Dinner in 1872, was due entirely to greater scarcity of labourers on account of emigration. Mr. A. W. Hall added the warning: "When the tidal wave of emigration has swept over us, we shall find that the industrious and thrifty are gone." [2] *Judy*, 1872.

forty-six years of age, in his early manhood had become "Champion Hedge Cutter of All England," and had travelled throughout the Midlands undertaking hedging and mowing contracts. He had had after a while twenty-five to thirty men under him, and the success of his methods in dealing with these made him even more convinced than he had been before that the ordinary farmer went the wrong way to work with his labourers. Arch found that it paid him to give better wages than were given around him and thus to let the new-comers among his men see that they served themselves as well as him best by bringing their work to a level that fitted them to remain in his company. From his boyhood Arch had been indignant at the way the labourers were being treated. Their housing and feeding he felt to be bad enough ; but he was stirred most of all by the spiritual contempt the farmers and others, who were not, in reality, of a different class from the labourers, showed to them. Year after year he had watched them being depressed in the social scale. In the 'forties he had seen the children of the village tradesmen climbing over their heads,—"sons of the wheelwrights, the master

tailor, and the tradesmen," he tells us, were then "just becoming genteel, and used to dress in shoddy cloth. These peacocky youngsters would cheek the lads in smock-frocks whenever they got the chance, and many a stand-up fight we used to have, regular pitched battle of smock-frock against cloth coat."[1] Through the 'fifties and 'sixties he had looked on at the dying out of the fights, as the shoddy coats waxed fatter, while the smock-frocks grew always more spiritless and lean. So much indeed had the spiritlessness increased, that when on the morning of 7 February, 1872, three labourers came to Arch's door to ask him to lead them in starting a Union, Arch found himself in very grave doubt as to their fitness for undertaking any kind of struggle.[2] "Could they," he questioned, "stand out? Had they grit enough in them to face the farmers as Englishmen demanding their just dues, when they had been cringing so long?" "They wanted to get the men together and start a Union directly. I told them that if they did form a Union they would

[1] *The Life of Joseph Arch*, Hutchinson & Co., p. 31.

[2] Mrs. Arch at the cottage door told the men roundly that their mission to her husband was useless, for they had not the spirit to carry out what they proposed.

have to fight hard for it, and they would have to suffer a great deal, both they and their families. They said the labourers were prepared to fight and suffer. Things could not be worse ; wages were so low and provisions were so dear, that nothing but downright starvation lay before them unless the farmers could be made to raise their wages."[1] The men spoke with a fervour Arch found convincing, and he consented to their request that he should speak to some labourers at Wellesbourne that evening. None the less his start for that meeting, he tells us, was made with considerable misgiving.[2] Spite of all his knowledge of the agricultural population, he was unprepared for the sight that at Wellesbourne met his eyes. In pitch darkness nearly two thousand labourers had gathered about an old chestnut tree. Not a notice or a handbill had been printed ; in the fields and on the farms word had been passed from mouth to mouth. By the light of hand lanterns slung on beansticks Arch spoke to the gathering for an hour ; the resolution to form the Union was carried, and then and there over two hundred members were enrolled.[3]

[1] *Life of Joseph Arch*, p. 68. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 69.

[3] Every member agreed to pay a subscription of 2d. a week.

Six weeks after this meeting at Wellesbourne, 30 March, 1872, *The Oxford Journal* writes: "A conflict between the farmers generally and the newly formed Labourers' Union is impending. The farmers are determinately opposed to the Union, which they assert, by organizing a general strike at a critical season, might put them to great inconvenience and subject them to a very heavy loss. Some farmers have already discharged all the men in their employ who have joined the Union, and other Union men are under notice. The farmers state that, having completed spring sowing, they are not being inconvenienced by the turn out, and that they could put on until harvest." The six-weeks-old Union, at this point, numbered some two thousand members. The moment appears to my mind as one of the most interesting in our history. All, or almost all, that Arch and his followers were saying seems to present-day minds reasonable and moderate. Yet, for the most part, the fury of Arch's antagonists was quite genuine. They felt that everywhere in England philanthropy was being practised to a degree that had not been dreamed of in their youth, and that instead of being met

with gratitude it was encountering rudeness and a new kind of demand. What more natural than that it should appear the working classes were being spoiled, and that the more they had the more they would want? Compared with the 'forties and 'fifties, the 'seventies was certainly a time of benevolence and of a stirring social conscience. In looking through such a book as *The Historical Handbook of Oxford*, published in 1871, we shall be amazed to find how much was being effected. Among many other undertakings in 1870, for instance, the Oxford Infirmary fever wards had been opened and the prison largely rebuilt. Whole villages were being kept in existence by charity. But charity had then, as it has now, a habit of appearing a day too late in the field. All social claims and standards are relative; and the farmers, willing enough to compare the benevolence of the 'seventies with its absence in the 'forties, forgot to institute certain other comparisons. They forgot how generally their grandfathers and their labourers' grandfathers had been on an equality. They forgot, too, how immensely their own ideas of comfort and self-importance had been increasing. Easy chairs, sofas, ornaments, fine

clothes, in homes of working farmers in the 'forties these had been unknown. Good farm-wives then had been taking their butter and eggs to sell in the market, while now they were piano playing and making calls. The husbands, too, had formerly been in the fields and not away hunting.

Blind as the farmers might be, it became very clear soon to the public at large that control of the situation in the degree they had held it had passed out of their hands. In a second six weeks the two thousand members of the Union had increased to fifty thousand.[1] "We met," Arch tells us, "by sunlight and moonlight, and starlight and lantern light. The sun in the sky or the farthing dip, it was all one to Union men at that time." We read these words, and thereupon we, the reader and the writer of this book, incline to ejaculate that this was a race of a different calibre from the young men about us to-day. There is much in this; because for forty years longer colonial emigration has been drawing off the best muscle and brain of our peasantry. But we shall do well to attempt to guard ourselves carefully

[1] *The Oxford Journal*, 18 May, 1872.

from falling into the kind of error the 1872 farmers were making. In our expectations of softness and ease you and I, probably, differ from our grandparents in about the same degree, relatively, as these people do from theirs. In the 'sixties, bedroom fires and hot baths were by no means general even in large country houses, while in the kind of house that takes them for granted to-day they were almost unheard of.

At the beginning of July a Union meeting was held at Milton-under-Wychwood. Two thousand people came to it, and Arch addressed them at length.[1] From to-day's standpoint the speech seems reasonable enough; but the way it appeared to the Union's opponents at that time is made clear to us by such letters to the newspapers as the one signed "An Oxfordshire Farmer" in the following week. "Let us," urges the writer, "not treat with, but destroy this Union," and he goes on to plead "not for a Wooton lock-out, or a county lock-out," but for a national one. Spite, or rather because of, the farmers' pig-headedness, the movement was rapidly spread into almost every

[1] Reported in *The Oxford Journal*, 6 July, 1872.

village and hamlet of Oxfordshire. At small, remote places such as Stonesfield and Coombe enthusiastic meetings were held. And—a fact which began to impress all disinterested spectators—not only were these gatherings peaceful, but when, both because the size of the meetings outran such accommodation, and because use of many village halls was denied to the Union, they were held out of doors, they were kept in the ticklish matter of "obstruction to traffic" well within the law.[1] Testimony to the orderly behaviour of the Union men was given by witnesses of all sorts. Mr. Henley, M.P., speaking at the dinner of the Oxfordshire Agricultural Society in the spring of 1872, called the attention of his hearers to the striking difference between this quiet, organized movement and the Swing Riots of forty years earlier. At a meeting on 26 October, Thorold Rogers made the statement that in the whole history of social risings he "knew of no combination, so temperate, so hopeful as the present." That same month[2] *The Times* reported: "On Sunday afternoon, Mr. E. Richardson, a lecturer in

[1] A test case, under this head, was brought against the Union at Faringdon, and lost.

[2] 11 October, 1872.

connection with the agricultural labour movement, addressed a large number of labourers at Cuddesden, close to which the Bishop of Oxford resides. During the proceedings the Bishop appeared and seemed to listen with much interest to the speaker, who dwelt on the folly of attempting to stay the progress of the Union by discharging able and willing hands, discharged Union men being present. At the close the Bishop made his way to the chair and asked permission to say a few words. He said he had not come to interrupt their proceedings, but he had been attracted by the singing of their hymn. When he found the nature of their meeting he determined to stay and hear for himself. He was glad he had done so, as he had heard a clear, practical, and temperate address. He had observed with pleasure their deep interest and orderly behaviour."

The singing which drew the Bishop's attention was a most marked feature of the Union's proceedings, as it had been of the Anti-Corn Law and the Chartist agitations :

> "One man with a dream, at pleasure,
> Shall go forth and conquer a crown ;
> And three with a song's new measure
> May trample a kingdom down,"

is the kind of saying we quote, yet think of as applying to the Latin races and not to ourselves. But it is astonishing to find what a large place singing always has had in the movements of the English populace, just as it is astonishing to discover that forms of dancing, afterwards copied by most of the Courts of Europe, originated with our peasantry.[1] And, at the end of the eighteenth century, this instinct for singing had been revived by the Wesleyan movement. Charles Wesley's hymns, sung as they were by the country people to their old English tunes, made half at least of the reality of that movement—a fact clearly appreciated by John Wesley as we see from Crabb Robinson's account of Wesley's last words to the people of Colchester. Snowy-haired, bent, within six months of his end, the old preacher was ; but as soon as a single verse of a hymn had been sung by the thousands who welcomed him, his voice went out in the words : " You have not lost your singing. Neither men nor women you have not lost a single note, and I trust by the assistance of the same God who

[1] Introduction to *The Country Dance Book*, by Cecil Sharp, Part I, pp. 8 and 11.

helps you to sing well, you will do all other things well."

By the end of 1872 the Union had fifty thousand members, London newspapers had taken up the labourers' cause, and as details of the struggle became known, funds for the strikers began to pour in; though it should be remembered always to the honour of Arch and his followers, that, when the lock-out commenced, they had five shillings only in hand. At this point the farmers should certainly have taken their warning. Not only was the Union maintaining a quietness which proved its strength; but, in Oxfordshire at any rate, the landlords, who had seen from the first that there were two sides to the question, were holding off from the struggle; Bishop Fraser, of Manchester, was writing to *The Times*: "Are the Farmers of England Going Mad?"; Canon Girdlestone was speaking in no uncertain voice; and, considering expediency alone, it should have been easy to see which way the current was setting. It was, however, to Oxfordshire that the privilege of setting the seal upon the public's sympathy with the labourer, and alienation from the farmer, was to belong. In May of 1873

the eyes of all England were turned to our locality. *The Times* and *The Daily News* sent special correspondents to Ascot-under-Wychwood and Chipping Norton, the names of our villages were heard from day to day in question and answer in the House of Commons. At Ascot Union men were on strike. A farmer, Hambidge by name, had added fuel to the popular excitement by summoning and obtaining costs from a carter, who, in going out, had neglected to give his week's notice. Hambidge had afterwards procured non-union men from a distance, and, when they were coming to work, the women of Ascot, armed with sticks, marched out to threaten them. On this account sixteen women were arrested and taken to Chipping Norton for trial. Little evidence was given, there was not the slightest proof that more than threats had been employed, and it was shown that the threatened men had proceeded to work on the farm. Yet the magistrates on the Bench sentenced the sixteen women, seven to ten days' imprisonment with hard labour, nine to seven days' with hard labour.[1] The Union authorities, regretting the unwisdom of any

[1] The magistrates were two clergymen.

kind of riot, were prepared for the infliction of fines ; but for these hard-labour sentences they and the public were quite unprepared. Wild excitement prevailed in Chipping Norton at the close of the trial ; a rescue of the women was planned and the police had to telegraph for military assistance. Ultimately the prisoners were taken in brakes to Oxford and lodged in gaol there before six o'clock the next morning. While the women remained in prison the details of these events spread throughout England. Publicity of this sort was of course the best of good fortune for the Union, and the cause of the labourers advanced very rapidly.

The case for the farmers in this encounter is stated in a letter which appeared in *The Times* of 2 June, 1873, and was reprinted in *The Oxford Journal* for 7 June. This manifesto of the Ascot farmers is the more valuable to us because the generation viewing affairs as these men viewed them has almost disappeared. One striking feature of the letter is its complete want of humour. It is written by people who have never been openly laughed at and who have never had the mental agility to laugh at themselves. The letter-writers complain that

for anyone openly unfavourable to the Union to appear in the streets of Ascot is to risk having "Ba, ba, Blacklegs" called after him! While Hambidge, they say, is a master against whom his men have never had the smallest complaint, "he no doubt was victimized first because his farm was the largest and his men all Unionists." How the Union had contrived to enrol every single labourer under an ideally satisfactory employer the letter neglects to explain! It is indeed very difficult now to reconstruct the minds of the time. Employers of all kinds have had what in those days they thought grievances against their workmen swallowed up completely by their far greater grievances now. But among the chief of the farmers' outcries at the time was the statement that Arch was breaking the tie between the men and their masters—the kind of tie that they said expressed itself in the feasts of the agricultural year. Shrove Tuesday, for instance, was the time of the Pancake Supper, when the shepherd and all who had helped him through the lambing season came into the farm kitchen and pancakes were fried for them on the hearth; in April, directly the spring corn was sown, came the Plum Pudding

Supper to the carter and his boys ; one evening at Whitsuntide the farmers dined with the men in the village ; in hay-time, when the fields nearest the house were being cut, there would be a woman's Hay Tea ; and, crowning all these events, was the Harvest Home when the last corn had been garnered. For this the wives and children, as well as the labourers, assembled in the farm kitchen, and roast beef, Yorkshire and plum puddings were provided for them. The farmers claimed too that Arch was led away, and they believed subsidized, by colonial Governments who were in need of more labour. This idea was without any foundation. Inevitably, and from the first, migration had been a part of the Union's policy. In July, 1872, we read in *The Oxford Journal :* " At Wooton on Wednesday morning about forty strong, able-bodied men mustered at six o'clock with their wives and families to proceed to ironworks near Sheffield " ;[1] a number were despatched to cotton mills, to railway works in general, and to the North-Eastern Company in particular. But of emigration Arch had a very real dread : " I was all," he tells us, " for migration from

[1] These men had been discharged for joining the Union.

one part of the country to another. But I did not want to see our best men taken out of the country. . . . I set my back stiff against the emigration door as long as I could; but the men slipped through, because there was hope on the other side of it."[1] In 1874 Arch reiterated his warnings to the Government and the people of England, but his words had no effect. The colonies, naturally, perceived their opportunity in this contest between the farmers and the labourers, and they made full use of it. "Emigration agents were busy. They hankered after the English labourer, who had the reputation of being the best of his sort."[2] They did not hanker in vain. Hundreds of families went from our villages; and that last tide of emigration which bids fair to-day to destroy the land under our feet began to set in.

Events in the Cotswolds move slowly; and while town life to-day is sundered almost entirely from town life at the beginning of the 'seventies, we are still being painfully reminded of our mistakes in those years. None the less, we have altered our ideas, and many of our ways, not corporately and statistically, but as between

[1] *The Life of Joseph Arch*, p. 96. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 178.

man and man, till we may be pardoned perhaps for not always recognizing the picture the townsman is drawing of us! He sees us altogether too much as we were in the 'seventies, at this our last public appearance. He gives us the opening to retort by holding up the mirror to his own features at that date. We offer to his consideration a London newspaper's summing up of the national occurrences of 1871:

"The year is well nigh over,
Christmassing has begun,
We've not been all in clover
Since eighteen seventy one.

"The 'Claimant' has been funded
For this his second run;
Would that he'd been well 'tunded'
In eighteen seventy one.

"'Alabama Claims' are settled,
The Yankee Land has won,
And England is more nettled
Since eighteen seventy one.

"Liquor Laws are mended,
Of Drunkards we have none,
They wish their days they'd ended
In eighteen seventy one.

"The Ballot says that Boxes
Alone shall know what's done,
And all men vote like Foxes
Since eighteen seventy one.

"'Flunkies,' 'workmen,' 'maids' have struck,
For liberty and fun,
'Bobbies' too have tried their luck
Since eighteen seventy one."

The effusion is serviceable for its list of these forty-year-old incidents, but, to my mind, it will be more serviceable still if the last of its stanzas may warn us that it is time that we dropped the use of a certain old tag. This 1872 poet winds up his verses by the demand:

"With all these numerous novelties,
Has anything been done
To raise our noble qualities
Since eighteen seventy one?"

And the voice might, might it not, be the voice of a twentieth-century Dean of St. Paul's?

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION

ALMOST for the whole of April growth in these parts was at a standstill. Though at the beginning of February the season was early, now, in the third week of May, it is late. From the summit of the road coming from Shipton the spring green about Burford appears filmy as blown smoke. Burford, in this view from the downs, is singularly lovely. It wears in the highest degree those aspects of cosiness, of mature and embosomed domesticity, which make up the exiled Englishman's visions of "home." It belongs to an England of mellowed simplicities, of soft little hills and clear shallow trout streams, of wild roses and daisies—the humanized England of Chaucer. Below the meadows, now with their gold-dust of buttercups and light surf of cow-parsley, runs the River Windrush, bounding the churchyard. Of the noble church much has been written, and its history is outside my range.

Yet its part in the present is remarkable. Archdeacon Hutton has reminded us that in the great days of Burford, days of the Guild, the Priory, the School, and the Charities, the Church was the centre of all.[1] It still is the heart of the place, and it gives a rare impression of spiritual continuity. Since the Reformation no addition of any sort has been made to it; and, though its beauties did not escape the obscuring hand of the nineteenth-century "restorer," all that could be—including a little wooden chantry probably unique in England—was re-exalted some thirty years ago; while in the last years the whole has been restored and tended with ever-increasing knowledge and reverence. Yet, so ludicrously do we keep our minds in compartments, that weeks after I had rejoiced in the church's pre-Reformation usedness and brightness, I found myself checked for a moment at sight of the Burford Fair swing-boats pressed up to its gates.[2] Only for a moment, however; looking again I could fancy a certain assurance in their swing. They were in the shelter of a church which never really

[1] *By Thames and Cotswold*, p. 136.

[2] As a new-comer to Burford, this was my first sight of the Fair, 25 September, 1912.

had been, and now never would be, divorced from the merriments of the people. Not till 1825 (and then only in response to Sabbatarian petitions) was the custom relinquished of the inhabitants of Burford marching to Capp's Lodge on Whitsunday afternoon to claim their yearly portion of venison,[1] this being a survival of the immemorial right of Burford to go, headed since Elizabethan days by its churchwardens, hunting in Wychwood on Whitsunday.

Much lies at the door of those Sunday Observance movements and petitions of the first half of the nineteenth century.[2] There was, as I have noted already, a great deal to be objected to in the Sunday of 1800; but, in a characteristically English fashion, the appearance, and not the root of the appearance, was attacked. Petitions against the holding of Cabinet Councils on Sunday, the running of the mails and mail coaches, Sunday trading and amusements of all kinds were set on foot, the petitioners being unable to realize how comparatively innocuous these things had been in

[1] *A History of the Town of Burford*, by Rev. John Fisher, Cheltenham, 1861.

[2] See *Oxford Journals* for this date.

the days of a church-going England.[1] For a time, however, petitions and petitioners were supreme, and the Sunday they instituted (in Commonwealth days the Puritan Sunday had never taken root in the country) has done much to crush out the life of our rural districts. Happily now its restrictions are largely removed, few persons to-day look askance at their servants or villagers for bicycling on Sunday afternoons. None the less, because of the vacant hanging of youths about street corners, Sunday reveals the ugliest side of our villages.

The question of amusement goes very deep, deeper than any other problem now in the country. Two small incidents have just brought this fact again home to me. A friend who is hard at work reviving Morris and country dancing in Oxfordshire was lamenting the want of any kind of public hall in her village of Kelmscott. My friend spoke simply and without bitterness, yet, to me, what she said seemed really startling. In a day when reviews and newspapers of every shade of political opinion are being filled with tirades upon rural problems,

[1] The number of communicants in Burford in 1546 was five hundred and forty-four. *English Schools at the Reformation*, Arthur F. Leach, p. 172.

the village from which one of the noblest voices of the century has championed the English peasant cannot provide a hall for its villagers to dance in. That persons who rejoice in William Morris's work (and almost every piece of furniture possessed by those who have homes of any taste has been influenced by him) tolerate this state of things seems very strange. And it is no case of a fancy demand ; the woman who spoke had the peasants ready instructed and proud of their dancing ; she only had not a place for them to dance in. Of her work, done in conjunction with Mr. Cecil Sharp,[1] she would not wish me to speak at any great length. It is sufficient to say that she is one of those born to do it. Her father had the same intensity of belief in life, and in open-mindedness to life, that Henry and William James's father possessed ; " Remember," he used often to say to his children, " we'll be a long time dead." Just after this friend had left me another caller came with his wife from a house they have built in one of the most beautiful positions in the southern counties. They are truly considerate,

[1] The very special part Oxfordshire has borne in the survival of Morris dancing may be learned from Mr. Cecil Sharp's Introduction to his book on *Sword Dances*.

KELMSCOTT MANOR: WILLIAM MORRIS'S HOME

their household is even a little socialistic in feeling, they give high wages ; but they cannot get servants. They are only a mile from a village, but village life about them has been crushed out ; village amusements have ceased to exist. Applicants who come to the place admit its beauty, the unusual conveniences of the house, all the practical advantages. But they will not stay. The Cockney furniture remover who brought the gardener's goods to the gardener's idyllic cottage summed up the feelings of his class in the exclamation : " My ! what an empty 'ole ! " So the emptiness of village life has worked its full circle and rounded upon the middle classes.[1] It is about the county these persons live in that Mr. George Bourne has written ; and no reader of *Change in the Village* can fail to be moved by his plea that, the old village being irrecoverably gone, some new kind of community must be devised. Happily, however, matters with us here are not at the pass they are at in Surrey. As yet, at any rate, the week-ender is not the same

[1] It is the middle-class household, such as this one, requiring two or three maids and a couple of gardeners, which suffers most at present. The " country house " staff, besides being more sufficient to itself, moves up and down to London.

menace to us; our village, and specially our country-town, life is comparatively intact. Our fields and our houses and barns are a genuine working survival; they are not speculatively preserved to form the last refinement of London suburbanism. This fact constitutes by no means the least of Cotswold's superiorities.

We have in this district, on a main line of rail within eighty miles of London, non-industrial villages and towns with a genuine present-day existence. By Victorian, or for that matter by Hanoverian, England they have hardly been modified at all. Their development practically stopped with the Stuarts; the hands of Time could be set back here to the Middle Ages as they could nowhere else in our land. We hold, and the "we" in this sense stretches almost to Oxford below us, what is in truth a priceless possession—a piece of pastoral England with its villages and towns unspoiled. Mr. Hilaire Belloc has written of the Evenlode:

> "She lingers in the hills, and holds
> A hundred little towns of stone
> Forgotten in the western wolds!"

and the words are even more true of the Windrush. Yet in the footsteps of him who wrote of

" a heart swelling with joy over these beautiful grey villages from the river to the plain and the plain to the uplands " many of us have followed. And finding the beauty of the past preserved as it is here we have adored, and rightly adored, it. We need to remind ourselves, however, that what we find is not the actuality of old England ; it is what has remained in the sieve when the sand and slush have gone through. It is necessary, further, to remind ourselves that we who bring eyes to see the countryside thus, bring eyes from away.[1] To realize this you have only to watch the present tide of emigration, or to talk with the young labourer. One evening lately, when the mayfly was pirouetting and level lights were burnishing the buttercup meadows to orange, a friend of mine who was fishing at Swinbrook exclaimed at the radiant glory of it all to a youth who was leaning on the bridge. " D'yer think so ? " he said. " I know I *'ates* ut ; I'm agoin' to get out of ut." As things are, it is useless to expect the peasant to see the land with our eyes. I feel it something of a parable that I first went to Kelmscott

[1] Not always, or at any time merely, from geographical distance, but from other and different mental horizons.

by way of Carterton.[1] We need to be really on our guard against false medievalisms, facile appreciations. Much of the spirit of ancient England expressed itself in the architecture of our villages, but the ancient emotions are not recoverable by any mere imitation of the forms of their expression.

In the towns, political theories and panaceas are developing at very high speed. The townsman feels it quite time to stimulate the notions of the countryman. Some of us who live in the country think that not the smallest of England's needs is that her agriculturists may remain in her democracy to balance her townsmen's cocksureness. The countryman, in regard to conditions he knows, has small faith in revolutions. He perceives well enough "how many a things go to everything"—how can he help perceiving it, indeed, when he has to raise crops in this climate? But, spite of his disbelief in radical or immediate changes in the country he knows, the agricultural labourer believes, alas! with a readiness that is tragic in tall tales of lands overseas. His education has tended to

[1] Carterton is a very ugly collection of smallholders' bungalows, bordering the road from Burford to Faringdon.

split his mind into halves, one half judging shrewdly, even a little cynically, perhaps, of things within his sight, the other gulping down pretty much whatever is told him of things at a distance. So, unless he is careful, the townsman's agitation of the countryman will succeed most directly in increasing the already deplorable rate of emigration to the colonies.[1] An Oxford economist has recently shown what an immense place in present-day life is taken by the artifices and methods of selling.[2] Everywhere in our rural districts emigration agents are at work "selling" their colonies. Why, in Heaven's name, is not some agency at work "selling" England? Labour Exchanges have done real good in the towns; but in regions like ours they mean nothing as yet. An experienced social worker in this neighbourhood wrote to me lately: "Our people hear nothing and know nothing of other parts of England. They see no choice between Charlbury and Canada. Why cannot the counties of England that want agricultural labourers send round

[1] The number of emigrants to the colonies from the British Isles between April, 1912, and March, 1913, was greater than in any previous year.

[2] *The Laws of Supply and Demand*, by G. Binney Dibblee.

agents to puff their advantages, as the colonies are everywhere doing?" And could not, this lady went on to question, some means be devised for subsidizing teachers and learners of hedging, dry-walling, ditching, and thatching? Cotswold men still excel in these arts,[1] at a time when complaint is being made that the knowledge of them is dying in many counties of England.

The townsman's concern for us at the moment turns almost entirely to matters of housing and wages. It goes without saying that a sufficiency of the material means of existence must be the foundation of any life worthy of the name. But necessary basis as a living wage[2] is, a lack of that is certainly not the whole of what is

[1] My illustration on the opposite page is of a piece of thatching done last year. Notice the double thickness on the north aspect of the roof.

[2] Wages in Oxfordshire and East Gloucestershire are undoubtedly low. But many enquirers, such as Mr. B. S. Rowntree in *How the Labourer Lives*, miss the important fact that in a considerable number of our villages the wife's earnings from glove stitching, done at home, equal, at times exceed, the husband's. If "Budget" enquiries are to be made in rural districts, they should be made, I am convinced, by persons on the spot. Every considerable Cotswold village nowadays contains a household, or households, of artists or literary people, from London or Oxford, whose reports would be impartial and yet informed.

NEW THATCH, LITTLE BARRINGTON

amiss in our villages. Personally, I doubt very much whether the day of the light-hearted, merry-making English peasant has ever existed ; the more we read contemporary records of past times the further that halcyon period recedes, till I find myself wondering whether it does not go back to the garden of Eden. I sincerely believe that the English agricultural labourer's condition, instead of growing worse, is to-day better, absolutely, than it ever has been. The real difficulty we are faced with is that it is not better relatively to his increased needs and desires. The ideals and standards of life of the whole of our nation have changed extraordinarily in the last sixty years. The labourer's standard of comfort and decency, like that of all other classes, has risen immensely. The factor that has stood still in the countryside is the average farmer's intelligence.[1] Higher wages no doubt will have to be paid ; and to pay them more will have to be got out of the soil than the methods of the present farmer get out of it. But however great the importance of a rise in wages may be, it does not, as I have said, touch anything like the whole of our problems.

[1] This is a truth too patent surely to be overlooked even by the most superficial Enquiry.

Largely, it is those of our people who have a living wage, and not the destitute ones, who are emigrating. A Cotswold working man said to me lately: "What can you expect when you've given twenty years of free education?" The saying was two-edged, of course, as sayings that go deep have a habit of being (nearly all our country people are critical of Board of Education methods, and they are apt to be quite unaware of the extent to which these are altering). But what this man had chiefly in mind was the fact that the labourer's mental horizon has been expanded out of relation to his conditions. That, it may be objected, is a state of things common now to workpeople everywhere. The objection has force. Yet the agricultural labourer's conditions have lagged more, all round, than conditions of other workers; modern life has brought him fewer compensations. His interests and excitements have not increased. On the contrary, an improved sense of decency in himself and the public, by putting an end to certain grosser pleasures, has diminished his amusements very considerably. We are apt, when we talk of the agricultural labourer and his conditions, to

have in mind men forty or fifty years old. About our Cotswold villages there is something —their lichen-grey stone perhaps, and their "flowers of middle summer," loosestrife and meadow-sweet and cranesbill—that makes us think of them as "given to men of middle age." We make a mistake in doing this. The villager to be dealt with to-day is so different from the villager of twenty, or even of twelve, years ago. In the mere matter of dress the change made by the present generation is astonishing. Ten years ago the cottage girl's idea of "Sunday" attire was flamboyant cotton satins and tinsels and laces. To-day I defy anyone, however keen may be his or her perception of line, in very many cases to be able to detect, at a distance, sometimes even till within range of speech, the difference between the elementary school teacher, shop girl, superior servant on the one hand, and ladies upon the other. The village girl some years ago began to relinquish her previous ideas of street dress in favour of the ideas of her social superiors, and, whatever we may think of the motives prompting the change, we cannot but be astonished at the degree in which it has been accomplished: among

country girls who are earning for themselves, a "tailored" appearance prevails almost universally. In the youth's clothes the alteration is less; in men's suits cheapness of material cannot be so easily hidden, but even here changed taste shows in the value set upon cast-off gentleman's tweeds at rummage sales, and in a tendency to wear flannels and straw hats upon holidays.[1]

We must, I am convinced, if we are to be of use to the villager, put ourselves alongside what is developed already, and work upon that. And what at the moment has been developed is in some respects distinctly unpleasing. From a village at the Oxford end of my district, for instance, complaints are loud, on the part of the more educated residents, that Cinematographs and Tangoes have gone to the young people's heads—the youths will not be taught carpentering or come to lectures or classes of the most

[1] In this connection it is, I think, worth while to note that Mr. Cecil Sharp's direction that his men dancers should wear white tennis shirts and trousers, instead of smock-frocks or any sort of rustic dress, appeared to me from the first as not the smallest of the proofs of reality in his movement. The same genuineness is present too, in degree, in Mr. Lascelles's village players, from just over the Warwickshire border, who quite comfortably mingle their humour with Shakespeare's.

persuasive kind, they will not, in fact, make any sort of effort after their day's labour is ended. That village presents a somewhat extreme example owing to its proximity to Oxford. Yet, even in such a case, no one, in my opinion, can fruitfully pass any judgment on the facts who will not make an effort to see them in perspective, who will not read newspapers, correspondence, speeches, of half a century ago to discover what really has been happening. In regard to the labourer's bearing to his superiors, and all the more superficial aspects of his life, we are in for a reaction undoubtedly.[1] But the more we really know of his life fifty, or even twenty-five, years ago the more we shall think the reaction inevitable. We of the comfortable classes took from the villager his bull-baiting, prize-fighting, his festival buffoonery

[1] Yet while his manners to his masters may have been spoiling, towards his family and his equals they have mended astonishingly. Within most of our memories must lie the time when village children's curtseys to us all went hand in hand with ceaseless baiting of the village idiot and cripple, and cruelty to every bird and beast in their range. In this connection I may remark also that persons who write to the newspapers to complain of the disturbance to bird and insect life caused by "nature study" enthusiasts from the village schools show themselves lamentably lacking in a sense of proportion. Childish meddling is nothing, weighed against the former cruelty.

and drunkenness, and we put nothing in the place of these things. We forbade him to be brutal; but we did not house, and pay him, and shorten his toil in a degree to encourage him to throw out new kinds of spiritual and intellectual interests. He grew every year more respectable, but daily more dull. Now he has taken the matter into his own hands; and we cannot, however ardently some of us may wish that we could, put the clock back.[1] The question that remains now is not whether the younger men and girls shall, or shall not, have a new measure of living. It is merely whether they go to the colonies to get it or whether they find it in England. Large economic changes are being talked of; they may, or may not, be on the way: in any case, real developments cannot come about quickly. Meanwhile, why

[1] The persons, and many such exist, to whom the changes taking place in the labourer's character appear merely hateful, are really objecting, in so far as their objections are intellectual and not simply considerations of personal convenience, to tendencies prevalent in every class to-day, and not, in the smallest degree, peculiar to the labourers. I shall not readily forget a conversation in which a man of brilliant intellectual attainments was bewailing the mercenary spirit of the labouring classes, who, he said, "worked now for money, and not for their masters," without the faintest idea, apparently, of how avariciousness and love of luxury had spread down to the peasant through every one of the classes above him.

should we not have The Irish Players and The Theatre in Eyre performing at Burford Fair, seats and shelters—bands even—on the closes and greens at such places as Witney and Leafield and Charlbury and Kingham ?[1] Even such small schemes as these will of course take various forms according to the shapes of the minds that propose them. But almost all of us might, I am convinced, do more than we do to set before the people now being besieged by the emigration agents something of the values, not directly estimable in pounds, shillings, and pence, that an old country offers them.

Widespread realization of such values can, of course, only come about gradually. How many, even of us whose bread and butter is secure, feel our countryside vividly except at particular times and in particular circumstances ? How rarely do we retain the holiday vision in a district we live in ? It is so difficult to bring the sustained emotion we bring to our personal affairs to the seeing of what we call inanimate things, to penetrating their slumberous appearance, and feeling their life. Yet to me the undulations of the Cotswolds suggest

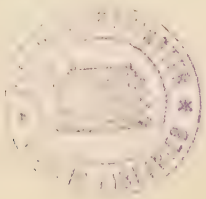
[1] Burford, alas ! to the disgrace of a town that once possessed three Commons, has now no Green or open ground of any kind.

movement very slightly encrusted. That "door in the wall," too, at Kelmscott, entering it is like stepping into crystal water, clear yet remote—a feeling going behind all conscious experience to things old and "far off" in the Wordsworthian sense. Are they pre-natal things, or inwindings with our earliest days of the *Water Babies* story? I wonder. Anyhow, for me such magic is peculiarly present in the Morris garden at Kelmscott, at the bend of the river just beyond the church at Upper Slaughter, and by the Windrush at Swinbrook and Asthall. If Kelmscott Manor were bigger it would not be nearly so characteristic. It seems to me always that Morris's lines

> "Kiss me, love! For who knoweth
> What thing cometh after Death?"

express the atmosphere of these valleys. With their softness and smallness, and their underlying wistfulness, they make the present so dear. They are so planted and tended, so fragrant of lives that have been. By an old farmstead at Swinbrook last night I gathered a bunch of red clover, and the spirit of the lower Cotswold slopes seemed in its scent.

THE LITTLE HOUSE,
BURFORD,
May, 1913.



APPENDIX TO CHAPTER II

(*The Beginning of the Century*)

OXFORDSHIRE CHRISTMAS

MIRACLE PLAY

[From *Notes and Queries*, 5th series, Vol. II, 26 December, 1874.] [Contributed by Dr. Frederick George Lee.]

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

King Alfred.
King Alfred's Queen.
King William.
Old King Cole (*with a wooden leg*).
Giant Blunderbore.
Little Jack.
Old Father Christmas.
St. George of England.
The Old Dragon.
The Merry Andrew.
Old Doctor Ball.
Morres-Men.

[*All the mummers come in singing, and walk round the place in a circle, and then stand on one side.*

Enter KING ALFRED *and his* QUEEN *arm-in-arm.*

I am King Alfred, and this here is my Bride,
I've a crown on my pate and a sword by my side.

[*Stands apart.*

Enter KING COLE.

I am King Cole, and I carry my stump,
Hurrah for King Charles ! down with old Noll's Rump !

[*Stands apart.*

Enter KING WILLIAM.

I am King William of blessed me-mo-ry,
Who came and pulled down the high gallows-tree,
And brought us all peace and pros-pe-ri-ty.

[*Stands apart.*

Enter GIANT BLUNDERBORE.

I am Giant Blunderbore, fee, fi, fum,
Ready to fight ye all—so I says, " come,"

Enter LITTLE JACK (BLUNDERBORE *continues*).

And this here is my little man Jack,
A thump on his rump and a whack on his back.

[*Strikes him twice.*

I'll fight King Alfred, I'll fight King Cole,
I'm ready to fight any mortal soul ;
So here I, Blunderbore, takes my stand,

With this little devil, Jack, at my right hand,
Ready to fight for mortal life. Fee, fi, fum.

[*The* GIANT *and* LITTLE JACK *stand apart.*

Enter ST. GEORGE.

I am St. George of Merry Eng-land,
Bring in the morres-men, bring in our band.

[MORRES-MEN *come forward and dance to a tune from fife and drum. The dance being ended,* ST. GEORGE *continues.*

These are our tricks. Ho! men, ho!
These are our sticks,—whack men so.

[*Strikes the* DRAGON, *who roars, and comes forward.*

The DRAGON *speaks.*

Stand on head, stand on feet,
Meat, meat, meat for to eat.

[*Tries to bite* KING ALFRED.

I am the dragon, here are my jaws,
I am the dragon, here are my claws.
Meat, meat, meat for to eat.
Stand on my head, stand on my feet.

[*Turns a summersault and stands aside.*

All sing, several times repeated.

Ho! ho! ho!
Whack men so.

[*The drum and fife sounds. They all fight, and after general disorder, fall down.*

Enter OLD DOCTOR BALL.

I am the doctor, and I cure all ills,
Only gullup my portions [qy. potions] and swallow my pills ;
I can cure the itch, the stitch, the pox, the palsy and the gout,
All pains within and all pains without.
Up from the floor, Giant Blunderbore !

[*Gives him a pill, and he rises at once.*

Get up King ; Get up Bride ;
Get up Fool, and stand aside.

[*Gives them each a pill, and they rise.*

Get up, King Cole, and tell the gentlefolks all,
There never was a doctor like Mr. Doctor Ball ;
Get up, St. George, old England's knight,

[*Gives him a pill.*

You have wounded the Dragon, and finished the fight.

[*All stand aside but the* DRAGON, *who lies in convulsions on the floor.*

Now kill the old Dragon, and poison old Nick,
At Yule-tyde both o' ye, cut your stick.

[*The doctor forces a large pill down the* DRAGON'S *throat, who thereupon roars, and dies in convulsions.*

Then enter FATHER CHRISTMAS.

I am Father Christmas ! hold, men, hold !
Be there loaf in your locker, and sheep in your fold,
A fire on the hearth, and good luck for your lot,
Money in your pocket, and a pudding in the pot.

He sings.

Hold, men, hold !
Put up your sticks,
End all your tricks ;
Hold, men, hold !

[*Chorus* (*all sing, while one goes round with a hat for gifts*).

Hold, men, hold !
We are very cold,
Inside and outside,
We are very cold.
If you don't give us silver,
Then give us gold
From the money in your pockets—

[*Some of the performers show signs of fighting again.*

Hold, men, hold !

Song and chorus.

God A'mighty bless your hearth and fold,
Shut out the wolf, and keep out the cold ;
You gev' [have given] us silver, keep you the gold,
For 'tis money in your pocket.—Hold, men, hold !

Repeat in chorus.

God A'mighty bless, etc.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER II

(The Beginning of the Century)

THE *Oxford Journal* for 29 October, 1831, contains twenty-four RULES FOR SERVANTS, among them :

" (7) Be modest in your behaviour ; it becomes your station, and is pleasing to your superiors."

" (10) Never tell the affairs of the family you belong to ; but keep their secrets and have none of your own."

" (15) Be careful of your master's property ; for wastefulness is a sin."

" (21) Be not fond of increasing your acquaintance ; for visiting leads you out of your business, robs your master of your time, and often puts you to an expense you cannot avoid."

The spirit pervading the whole twenty-four clauses is summed up in the N.B. at their foot. " All who pay regard to the above precepts will be happy in themselves, will never want friends, and will meet with the assistance, protection, and encouragement of the wealthy, the worthy, and the wise."

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER IV

BOARD OF AGRICULTURE, 1793–1822

Created a corporate body by Royal Charter dated 23 August, 1793, to the effect that—

> "George the Third by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, and so forth, had ordained, given and granted that there should be for ever hereafter a Board or Society which should be called by the name of the Board or Society for the Encouragement of Agriculture and Internal Improvement," of which Board or Society His Majesty declared himself to be the "Founder and Patron."

Under the Charter the Board was constituted of a President, sixteen ex-officio and thirty Ordinary Members, and was empowered to appoint as many Honorary Members "as to them shall seem meet," and also Corresponding Members "natives or foreigners."

It will be seen therefore that the Board was not a Government Department, but was essentially a Society for the Encouragement of Agriculture, and though supported by Parliamentary funds, the Government of the day had only a limited control over its

affairs, through the ex-officio Members. A transference of political power from one party to another did not necessarily affect its policy or administration, and the Board exercised none of the executive functions of Government. In reality the Board was a pioneer of the Royal Agricultural Society of to-day.

In 1819 the Board were unable to expend their annual Parliamentary grant of £3000, and in 1820 the grant was discontinued. An attempt was then made to carry on the work of the Board by means of donations and subscriptions from the public, but the response made was not sufficient, and the Board was dissolved in 1822.

An account of the functions and proceedings of the Board will be found in Sir Ernest Clarke's paper in Volume IX of the *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society*, third series, of 1898, from which the above short note has been extracted.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER IV

(*Nineteenth-Century Enclosures*)

AN INQUIRY

INTO the Propriety of Applying Wastes to the Better Maintenance and Support of the Poor: With Instances of the Great Effects which have Attended their Acquisition of Property in Keeping them from the Parish even in the Present Scarcity.

Being the Substance of some Notes taken by the Editor in a Tour in the Year 1800.

In the progress of the journey which I made in the year 1800, the more peculiar object of which was the waste lands in the counties I should travel, I found many reasons for combining with that object two others—the state of the poor, and the amount of the rates levied for their support. Instances occurred of parishes containing great commons and waste tracts, of which little or no use is made, and at the same time raising immense sums for the poor, expended in a manner which left them almost as wretched as if no such efforts had been made for their support. It did not strike me that the wastes would provide for them much better than parish rates, till I met with one or two very singular instances; but when these were

duly examined, they opened the view to a field of such extent, and, as I thought, of such importance, as was sufficient to induce me to redouble my attention wherever anything similar might occur. Other cases, in succession, did offer themselves, of which I have preserved the details.

From these I believe it will be found, that of all the methods of improving waste land, none are so important or so profitable as applying them to the support of the labouring poor.

Of these particulars I have drawn out such an account as will enable the reader to judge for himself; but as the minutiæ of such objects would perhaps be too unpleasant to receive the attention of those who have not time to enter into the detail of such inquiries, I have sketched a *précis* of the subject, annexing such observations as occurred; with a reply to all the objections I have in the course of my journey heard to the proposition I have built on these inquiries.

DATA

CHATTRIS, *Cambridgeshire.*—About a hundred small cottages have been raised of late years on the common, so close to each other as to admit only a path around them; very few have gardens; many were built by the owners, who inhabit them, and did not cost more than £10 or £12. The proprietors have no relief from the parish.

BLOFIELD, *Norfolk.*—Thirty families have taken 39¾ acres of land from the common, and built very good and comfortable cottages; many must

have cost £40, £50, and even £60. They have 23 cows and 18 horses among them. Average of land 1⅓ acre, average of live stock 1⅔ head. Only 16 have cows, 8 neither cows nor horses, and 11 less than an acre of land each. 150 souls thus established have cost the parish (by a very inflamed account) £24; while 110 others, the rest of the poor, burthened it £150 in the same half year. If 110 without land cost £150, what would 260, the total poor, have cost, if none had land?

Answer	£354
Instead of which it is	174
Saving to the parish, by 40 acres and 41 head of live stock, in half a year .	£180

HETHERSETT, *Norfolk*.—Enclosed by Act of Parliament, and proves how much the poor are desirous of having property divided rather than in common. The commissioners were enabled by the Act to offer double allotments to cottagers possessing under £5 a year, if they would have them in common under regulations and trustees, and free of all expenses. They chose single allotments separate, though to pay all the expenses of the enclosure equally with the other proprietors.

WESTON COLVILLE, *Cambridgeshire*.—Enclosed by Act of Parliament, when several parcels of land were laid to the cottages; some had large gardens, others two or three acres. They do not all keep cows, joining to plough and get bits of corn, which

they like better. In this scarcity a trifle may have been occasionally given by the parish to one or two of them ; but, generally speaking, they are never burthensome : are very comfortable.

NAZEING, *Essex*.—The common rights regulated by Act of Parliament. The poor were remarkably idle and dissolute ; but Mr. Palmer offering to advance money for every poor man who could not afford to buy live stock, many accepted it, and every man of them repaid him in two years, some sooner. They are converted by this property to as sober and regular a people as they were before licentious.

ALDERSHOT, *Surrey*.—Several cottages built on the common, whose owners have taken from three-fourths to two acres each ; some have a cow, others a pig. This not only keeps them from the parish, but some are actually charged to and pay the rates.

WORPLESDEN, *Surrey*.—An instance of an old man and his wife living in such a state of wretchedness, in a miserable hovel with a small garden on the common, as I have not seen anywhere else ; but the love of property keeps them from the parish.

CHOBHAM, *Surrey*.—Many poor people have built themselves cottages on the common, but very few have any live stock. Some of them receive a small matter from the parish in this scarcity, others have nothing. They assert that a cow would be a great assistance, and keep them from ever being burthensome.

FARNHAM, *Surrey*.—Above 100 families have built cottages on the common. I examined 47 of them, who possess about 20 acres, besides some gardens; 24 of them have 103 children at home, the other families I have not noted. These (147 persons in all) are supported with no other allowance from the parish than £4 8s. 1½d. per week, or 7d. per head per week; yet there are only four cows among them. They would readily give up the parish for a cow, and many would agree to repay the cost by instalments. Every five persons in the workhouse cost £64 10s. 10d. per annum; consequently, for one year's expense of a family they might establish two on the common free of expense ever after.

BUXTEAD, *Sussex*.—A family seated on the common would rather have a cow than 6s. a week from the parish.

MAYFIELD, *Sussex*.—Here is a case which proves the assertion in the preceding article: a family chargeable when there was no scarcity, ceased to be chargeable in the scarcity, from a cow being given by the parish.

WIMPOLE, PETWORTH, and WOBURN.—Lord Hardwicke gives gardens to his cottagers; but observing them very badly cultivated, he offered premiums, to encourage better cultivation. The effect so great that their management became exemplary. The Earl of Egremont, at Petworth, and the Duke of Bedford, at Woburn, have each

made exertions in favour of their cottagers. Mr. Vernon, in Suffolk, the same.

LINCOLNSHIRE, etc.—In 48 parishes, 753 labourers and their families, renting land sufficient for one or two cows, have received NOTHING from their parishes throughout the late and present scarcities.

OBSERVATIONS

It is sufficiently evident from all these cases that the great engine wherewith the poor may be governed and provided for the most easily and the most cheaply, is property; but by our poor laws the effect (undesignedly) upon the poor has been that rather of impoverishment than acquisition, and of promoting idleness rather than industry, by an impolitic and expensive supply from hand to mouth. The consequences of this conduct have matured themselves into such a mass of poor rates as to be ruinous to many little housekeepers, while the poor, deprived of all spirit and ambition, have sunk into such dependence on the parish, that their poverty has kept pace with the errors of the system; and has arrived at such a pitch, that if some effective cure be not devised, very mischievous consequences may be expected. Rates, within two or three years, have doubled; and past experience tells us, that although they rise by reason of the high price of corn, they do not proportionately sink with a low price. If every scarcity be thus to advance them, they will, in no long period, absorb the rents of the kingdom—not to give ease and com-

fort to the lower classes, but to leave them, if possible, in a worse situation.

The evil being of such a magnitude, it well deserves the consideration of the Legislature, whether a totally contrary system, proved by so many remarkable cases to be capable of producing great effects, ought not to be adopted; and the more especially as in the main point it agrees with the proposition made by Mr. Pitt some years ago to the House of Commons.

Many authors have remarked with surprise the great change which has taken place in the spirit of the lower classes of the people within the last twenty years. There was formerly found an unconquerable aversion to depend on the parish, insomuch that many would struggle through life with large families, never applying for relief. That spirit is annihilated; applications of late have been as numerous as the poor; and one great misfortune attending the change is, that every sort of industry flags when once the parochial dependence takes place; it then becomes a struggle between the pauper and the parish, the one to do as little and to receive as much as possible, and the other to pay by no rule but the summons and order of the justice. The evils resulting are beyond all calculation; for the motives to industry and frugality are cut up by the roots when every poor man knows that if he do not feed himself, the parish must do it for him; and that he has not the most distant hope of ever attaining independency, let him be as industrious and frugal as he may. To acquire land enough to build a cottage on is a hopeless aim in ninety-nine parishes out of one hundred.

But the cases here detailed prove clearly, that wherever there is such a hope, it operates beyond all the powers of calculation. How these men were able to effect their object surpasses enquiry; that they saved money with this view is palpable, because in most of the cases the erections have been the work of regular carpenters and masons, who could not have been employed without a considerable part of the expense being provided for; and this accordingly I found the case, for where mortgages had taken place, it was only for a part of the expense, in many instances for only a small part, and in some, not a few, without any such assistance at all.

And here it is deserving of great attention, that during the very period in which the poor have in general become wholly dependent, and burthened their parishes to an enormous amount, these cases of saving frugality and industry have occurred in a few places with no other motive or instigation but the prospect of becoming proprietors of their own cottages. What a powerful motive has this proved, to render them such striking exceptions to a whole kingdom!

But they have done much more than at first appears in this view of the matter, for their operations have had enemies everywhere; they have at every place had to fight their way through a host of foes—their fences levelled—their works of all sorts viewed with the most jealous eyes—opposed—in some cases defeated—in all calumniated. That their means have been all unobjectionable, I am far from asserting; but that they would have been so if their design had been

viewed as it ought to have been, I have not a doubt; for they received little but discouragement when they ought to have been liberally assisted, and they have in some cases been absolutely stopped from all further proceedings of the kind.

It is evident from the details that this has arisen from the parishes being without any regular system, and remaining ignorant, or without power to turn their wastes to their own immense and incalculable advantage.

Nothing can be clearer than the vast importance which all these poor people, scattered as they are through so many counties, and affected by circumstances so extremely various, attach to the object of possessing land, though no more than to set a cottage on. Of this there can be no dispute; and as an object does exist, the prospect of which will induce industry, frugality, patience, and exertion without bounds, while everywhere else, without this object in view, the very contrary qualities have thriven and increased to the enormous burthen of the kingdom, surely the great and unquestionable importance of using this powerful lever to work upon the people at large—to turn this deep-rooted prejudice to public account—to assist, instead of impeding its progress—and to nourish those principles of independence which are banished in every other place, is become a point essential in the management of the poor.

When we sit by our firesides and ask how a poor labourer can afford to build a comfortable cottage, enclose some land, break up and cultivate a rough waste, acquire some live stock, and get many con-

veniences about him, we defy calculation; there must be some moving principle at work which figures will not count, for in such an enquiry we see nothing but impossibilities. But we forget a thousand animating principles of human feeling. Such effects could not possibly have been produced without a series of years of great industry and most economical saving—to marry a girl and fix her in a spot they can call their own, instigates to a conduct, not a trace of which would be seen without the motive ever in view. With this powerful impulse they will exert every nerve to earn, call into life and vigour every principle of industry, and exert all the powers of frugality to save. Nothing less can account for the spectacle, and such animating prospects will account for anything.

Go to an alehouse kitchen of an old enclosed country, and there you will see the origin of poverty and poor rates. For whom are they to be sober? For whom are they to save? (Such are their questions.) For the parish? If I am diligent, shall I have leave to build a cottage? If I am sober, shall I have land for a cow? If I am frugal, shall I have half an acre of potatoes? You offer no motives; you have nothing but a parish officer and a workhouse!—Bring me another pot——

It is true that wastes are not everywhere to be found, but the principles of property are universal; and the more they are encouraged amongst the poor, the less burthensome will they be found. He who cannot possess an acre may be the owner of a cow; and a man will love his country the better even for a pig.

One hundred and twenty-eight rods of potatoes are found in Ireland to be sufficient for the support of a family through much the larger part of the year; about three-quarters of an acre therefore per family removes them from a dependency on wheat, placing them in that respect in such a situation that it is of little or no consequence to such families whether wheat is at 5s. or £5 per bushel. The prodigious importance of such a state of the poorest classes must be obvious at the first blush.

It is evident from the preceding cases that the possession of a cottage and about an acre of land, for on an average these poor people's encroachments do not exceed that portion, if they do not keep the proprietor in every case from the parish, yet very materially lessen the burthen in all. If the weekly sums thus received be compared to what is paid to poor families in any part of the kingdom where wastes have not been thus applied, it will be found that the difference is much greater than could well be conceived when compared with the quantity of land, and forming a rent in this saving very much beyond the value of it in any other possible application. But the effect which is here proved to attend the possession of a cow is very extraordinary; they all agree uniformly in this point, and assert that they would rather have a cow than any parish allowance here noted, valuing it even so highly as 5s. or 6s. per week; and this by men who must know what the benefit is, having possessed and also lived without a cow. It does not follow that wastes are to be preserved in common that the poor may keep cows, but the fact clearly proved, and which applies

universally where the land is good enough to keep them at all, is, that the portion sufficient to feed a cow, enclosed and allotted to a cottage, is of that degree of importance.

That giving property to the poor, and that sort of property which they are most anxious to possess, would fix in their hearts a great attachment to and affection for their country is obvious ; and the present state of the lower classes renders this a very essential object ; I will not explain that state, it is well known. Suffice it to say, that the first promulgation of such a plan as I propose would do more instantly to appease their minds and render them patient under their present sufferings than perhaps anything that could practically be devised. Nor would the extent of the relief be inconsiderable ; there are commons or wastes through much the larger part of the kingdom, and consequently the mass of the benefit would be of a magnitude well deserving the attention of the Legislature.

In periods of scarcity a considerable benefit would result to the poor from the peculiar tendency of this mode of provision to meet the exigencies of the times. Prices in such periods always rise far beyond the deficiency of the crop, then such of the poor as have land feel the advantages of it doubly. I found both the Blofield and Farnham cottagers much pleased with having reaped a tolerable, and in some cases a very good crop of corn, and comfortably consoling themselves that they had potatoes of their own, and were not forced to buy at the high price of the market. Whatever they have to sell produces a good return,

which gives them some interest in the rise so utterly ruinous to such as are without land. Some of these cottagers had small plots of hops, and told me of great advantage derived from them, even selling as much as produced £6 or £7. Those who go much among the poor must know what a great effect this has on the mind in instigating to industry ; such motives are not to be estimated ; they can neither be brought to the bushel nor the scale ; it is not a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence ; it works in the soul ; it animates the heart more than twice the value gained in any other way.

While a general enclosure of wastes is called for by one universal voice, it becomes peculiarly proper to consider what has been the effect of parliamentary ones relative to the immediate interests of the poor ; as I have heard some gentlemen observe that such a measure would cure all evils : upon right principles I believe it would, but such very general views being apt to lead to error, it will be necessary to examine the question particularly.

In this journey I examined the effect of above a hundred and forty parliamentary enclosures on the production of human food—on population—on the poor rates—and on the situation and comforts of the poor : in great numbers the last article was not to be ascertained ; in some, from the enclosure having taken place long ago ; in others, from the want of knowledge in my informants ; and for other reasons : but in the following cases I received the information I sought for.

EFFECT OF ENCLOSURES ON THE POOR

SANDY.—Injured.

EATON.—Injured. Their cows much lessened.

WARBOYS.—Many kept cows; now few. They were certainly injured.

RAMSEY.—Cottagers' cows lessened.

ALCONBURY.—Highly injurious to them. Many kept cows that have not since. They could not enclose, and sold; and with those that hired, the allotments thrown to the landlords, and the poor left without cows or land.

MARCH.—Those of property benefited, all who hired were ruined.

WIMBLINGTON.—Ditto.

BARRINGTON.—One acre allotted for the right of 3 sheep and 2 cows.

LONGSTOW.—Several kept cows who keep them no longer.

ABINGTON.—Suffered greatly. All allotments thrown to one person, and their cows vanished. Suffered so much as to stop enclosing for many years.

MORDEN GUILDEW (the Act just passed).—Their cows will be dissipated. They are greatly alarmed.

STREATHAM (not enclosed, but talked of).—Abhor the idea, because all their cows would go.

L. WILBRAHAM.—A common allotted, and never to be occupied but by cottagers.

WESTON COLVIL.—Cottagers with rights better off, others lost their cows.

CARLETON.—Improved.

NORTHWOLD.—Suffer. Twenty who kept stock, keep it no longer. Others bettered. Allotments can neither be let nor sold from the houses.

HILLBOROUGH.—Suffered.

FINCHAM.—Injured in fuel, and cows gone.

SHOULDHAM.—Much injured in both fuel and live stock.

GARBOISETHORPE.—Poor kept 20 cows before, now none.

MARHAM.—They have not suffered.

LEXHAM.—Cows lessened.

HEACHAM.—Much comfort from little properties of 2 to 10 acres. They keep cows, and have corn.

SEDGFORD.—Injured.

BRANCASTER.—Well treated.

SALTHOUSE.—Ditto.

FELTHORPE.—Much injured.

(Missing).—Very well treated.

SHROPHAM.—Well treated.

LANGLEY.—Ditto.

ACLE.—Much injured.

SHOTTISHAM.—Well treated. Cows increased.

OLD BUCKENHAM.—Well treated.

BARNABY.—Ditto.

BARTON MILLS.—Injured. Cows annihilated.

PARNDON.—Their little allotments all sold.

BASINGSTOKE.—Injured.

Injured in 37 cases, not injured only in 12.

Before any observations are made on this table, it is necessary to explain, that by the poor being injured it is not at all meant that no good results to some of them, even in these cases: in soils which are kept in tillage there is, without any question, a considerable increase of employment truly valuable to the poor. Let no one imagine that one word offered in this paper is meant generally against enclosing; all contended for is, simply, that such of the poor as kept cows in these parishes, could keep them no longer after the enclosure; that instead of giving property to the poor, or preserving it, or enabling them to acquire it, the very contrary effect has taken place; and as this evil was by no means *necessarily* connected with the measure of enclosing, it was a mischief that might easily have been avoided, and ought most carefully to be avoided in future.

In the minutes I took of these and many other enclosures, many instances will be seen in which the small value of common rights is noted from the low rent in some cases paid for them; but this proves nothing against giving the poor land distinctly; nor is it even an argument proving the position for which it is brought, as letting to the inhabitants of other parishes is precluded, and when the home poor are unable to get the stock, the price at which a right lets can be no criterion of its value.

Commissioners of enclosures are little apt to confess anything against them, but I met with three in one county who furnished me with observations that merit notice.

Mr. Forster, of Norwich, after giving me an account

of twenty enclosures in which he had acted as a commissioner, stated his opinion on their general effect on the poor, and lamented that he had been accessory to injuring two thousand poor people, at the rate of twenty families per parish. Numbers in the practice of feeding the commons cannot prove their right; and many, indeed most who have allotments, have not more than an acre, which being insufficient for the man's cow, both cow and land are usually sold to the opulent farmers. That the right sold before the enclosure would produce much less than the allotment after it, but the money is dissipated, doing them no good when they cannot invest it in stock.

Mr. Ewen, a commissioner in the same place, observed that in most of the enclosures he has known the poor man's allotment and cow are sold five times in six before the award is signed.

Mr. Burton, of Langley, a very able commissioner, wished for a clause in all Acts on the principle of that of Northwold, which makes the allotment unalienable from the cottage, as he admits there is a considerable benefit in the poor people having land enough for a cow; from two to four acres, according to the soil.

As there is not the least necessity for the evil here complained of, and merely a call that in passing enclosure Acts the rights and interests of the poor should be attended to, which it is too plainly evident they have not been, I conceive that it becomes a matter of propriety to point out such evils; and at a period in which every exertion is making to assist and relieve the poor, that this necessary one should not be neglected. To pass Acts beneficial to every other class in

the State, and hurtful to the lowest order only, when the smallest attention would prevent it, is a conduct against which reason, justice, and humanity equally plead.

The rise of poor rates in parishes that have been enclosed having kept pace with the increase in other parishes, is another proof that there has been something deficient in the principles which have conducted them. Above 60,000 acres of commons have been enclosed in the places which I have registered ; in the following the rise is noted particularly :

	Acres of Com.		s.	s. d.
Lidlington	497	..	1 to	4 6
March	3440	doubled to £1300.		
Chattris	4320	..	2 to	4 6
Abington	80	..	0 to	2 6
Wilbraham	469	more than doubled.		
Hillborough	420	doubled.		
Fincham	647	trebled.		
Hethersett	430	..	5 to	10 0
Barton Mills	300	..	4 to	13 0
	10,603		20 to	53 0

These are selected merely because the old rates, the new, and the commons are all minuted. The rise has been equal in the rest. It should therefore seem, that notwithstanding the increase of employment, yet there has been some contrary current which has been bearing heavily against the force of such employment. On the contrary, if a right use had been made of a very

small portion of these commons, poor rates might have been done away altogether.

And this leads to some other cases which should in the next place be examined.

WYMONDHAM.—This place contains 3100 souls, and pays £4150 a year to the house of industry. Never less than £1184. The average expense of maintenance in the house, including everything, for four years, from 1797 to 1800, was £13 4s. 8d. a head, or for a family of five £66 3s. 4d. This parish contains 1800 acres of unenclosed common, the soil rich. Now it is a curious fact in the history of our poor, that they expend as much in one year for one family as would settle two, perhaps three, on their common, cleared of the parish for ever ! !

BOCKING.—The poor rates of this place are £1 10s. in the pound. Population of about 3000, of which 1700 are relieved, at the expense of £6840, but their situation miserable. At five to a family, there are 340 families, and the charge (other expenses deducted) £17 12s. per family. The expense of those in the workhouse £10 per head, or £50 per family. I examined many of the poor in the presence of the perpetual overseer, and asked them which they would prefer, to go on as they do, or have an acre of land given them, with a hog, seed, and allowance till set a-going, but unalienable ; and if again chargeable, to revert to the parish. All answered, " The land, far away ! " To buy this at £30 an acre, adding £20 per family,

reaches only to the charge at present paid in the workhouse for a single year; that is, one year's expense settles a family for ever.

BURY.—The total expense of the poor this year is £8373 2s. 7d.; and of 294 in the workhouse, £3787 18s. 9d., or £12 17s. 7d. per head, and £64 7s. 11d. per family. Enough to purchase two acres of good land. To purchase one acre and a half and leave a surplus of £19 7s. 11d. to provide for a family, and, as in the other cases, convert the expense of one year into a perpetual establishment!

Let not the reader imagine that these are singular cases, I have reason to believe they are very general; but I cannot omit the opportunity of remarking that such horrible abuses call aloud for parliamentary attention; and no body so properly adapted both for enquiring into the facts, and preparing them for the inspection of Parliament, as the Board of Agriculture.

That the kingdom ought to be examined with this particular view cannot admit a doubt.

If we combine the preceding facts, the following corollaries may in all fairness be drawn from them:

I. That nothing tends so strongly to give the poor industrious and frugal habits as the prospect of acquiring or the hope of preserving land.

II. That wherever they are possessed of it, they are either kept entirely from the parish, or supported at a very small comparative expense.

III. That parishes are at as great an expense to

keep them in a state of distress as would fix them in a comfortable situation.

IV. That enclosures as hitherto conducted have no such effect.

If these deductions are fairly made, and I trust they will be found so, it then remains for consideration whether they do not furnish reasons of sufficient weight to induce the Legislature to attend to an enquiry of singular importance to the poor, and by consequence eventually to every class of the community. To point out specifically in what manner a public use might be made of these cases, which harmonize with the facts laid before the Board of Agriculture by a noble member,[1] would be improper in a private individual, uncalled upon, to detail: but in one instance something may be ventured without too great a hazard; and this is, in all future enclosures of waste lands, whether by distinct Acts of Parliament, or by a general enclosure, in these provision ought certainly to be made for a better attention to the interests of the poor. No allotment ought to be made to any commoner who has kept a cow, that will not suffice for the summer and winter maintenance of it. Such allotment should be unalienable from the cottage, and to be held and occupied only by the inhabitant. There are already precedents for this, and more than one are noted in the minutes of this journey, as well as recommended by Mr. Burton, the commissioner, from having long witnessed the evils resulting from the omission.

By the Sayham enclosure every man who proved to

[1] The Earl of Winchilsea.

the commissioners that he had been in the habit of keeping stock on the common, whether with or without right, had an allotment.

By the Little Wilbraham Act, passed 1797, no person occupying twenty acres of land shall ever occupy a common right, even if they should *possess* they cannot *occupy* it.

By the Northwold Act, 1796, the allotment for fuel, with right to cut, cannot be alienated, assigned, or conveyed from the houses.

But a further provision should be made for such families as are chargeable to the parish, under certain limitations, and who should be willing to accept land in lieu of parochial relief, to enable the parish thus to provide for them in ease of their rates. And the proportion of the land thus applied might be regulated by the amount of the rates (for instance, that one-fifth, one-sixth, or what other proportion might be fixed on, should annually be thus employed) till a given proportion of the chargeable poor should be provided for in an allotment made to the parish for this purpose. Such allotment should not be applied to any other use, that no private interest might impede the progress of the plan.

There are instances minuted of such allotments for fuel and common to the amount even of 300 acres; which would, under such a clause as I now propose, have provided far better and more effectually for the poor, had such a power been given to those parishes.

If the Legislature should take the present burthen of poor rates into consideration, and the means of preventing (should it be possible) their absorbing

gradually the whole rental of the land, or should they enquire into the means of giving permanent relief to the poor, a very important use may thus be made of wastes. It will rest with their wisdom to enter into the detail of the means of executing the plan, and the circumstances which should regulate it. But it would be no difficult matter to frame a scale of assistance in land, which should answer to certain weekly stipends, in the present system.

Where there are no wastes, and land to be bought at a low rate, from its uncultivated state or other circumstances, and in some cases even where it is good, it appears that it may be purchased to great advantage ; and in situations still different the renting plan may be adopted, and the live stock, etc., only found by the parish. Of this more hereafter.

As to the expense of settling a family on waste land, it may be estimated various ways.

THE NORFOLK CALCULATION

	£	s.	d.
Building, fencing, cow, pig, seed, furniture, and land (three acres) are	52	18	0
The same, if no furniture . .	42	18	0
If no house	22	18	0

THE BOCKING CALCULATION

	£	s.	d.
To buy the land (an acre) . .	30	0	0
A hog	1	5	0
Fencing	3	0	0

	£	s.	d.
Seed	2	2	0
Sundries	10	0	0
16 weeks' allowance, 4s. 6d. .	3	13	0
	50	0	0

If £10 were added towards a house on the spot, when they should be able to raise the rest, it would be . . .

	£	s.	d.
	60	0	0

If land were cheaper, more might be had, thus:

	£	s.	d.
At £10 an acre, three acres would be	30	0	0
Cow and sundries, as in Norfolk .	22	18	0
	52	18	0

IN THE RENTING SYSTEM

	£	s.	d.
Rent, etc., of three acres . .	3	10	0
Cow	10	0	0
Hog	1	5	0
Fencing	3	0	0
Weekly allowance . . .	5	0	0
	22	15	0

Suppose the people ten millions, and that half are supported by the parishes, this is five millions; and without making any deductions for manufacturers or great cities, let us estimate that the benefit in some shape or other should be extended to all: five millions of people are one million of families; they might be

divided into five classes of 200,000 in each, and thus provided for :

£	£
200,000 at 60 . . .	12,000,000
200,000 at 50 . . .	10,000,000
200,000 at 40 . . .	8,000,000
200,000 at 30 . . .	6,000,000
200,000 at 20 . . .	4,000,000
1,000,000	40,000,000

I have made this calculation for the mere purpose of showing that two-thirds or four-fifths of one year's expenditure of the public would provide for all the poor in the kingdom ; and if it lessened poor rates only £2,000,000, the saving would pay interest at 5 per cent for the money ; but such a plan would, without question, lessen them in a much greater proportion.

The system would admit of many modifications both to lessen the expense and to render it more easily practicable. The parishes should execute it and borrow the money of the public, on the credit of their rates. If the case of a single family is taken, it will show the immense importance of the saving. Fifty-two pounds establish a family completely and free from all future parochial assistance ; the interest of this is only 1s. per week ; but a chargeable family costs the parish more than double even in good times ; at present 5s., 6s., 8s. a week, and yet without the poor being in a situation comparable to what land and cow would place them in.

Had parishes the power of thus providing for the poor, knowing at the same time that they could have

the money of Government on the security of their rates, all might not demand it at once ; or it might be gradually done, limited to so many millions sterling per annum, and dispensed according to circumstances.

Certain it is, that the spectacle of a very distressed poor, depending not on themselves but on the parish, with seven or eight millions of waste acres scattered over every part of the kingdom ; rates to the amount of seven, eight, or nine millions sterling, and a country so rich that any sums might be borrowed, seem to form a most contradictory and incongruous system—to manifest want of policy—to betray an inattention to circumstances which once properly combined would dissipate every difficulty, and render this country as happy for the lower classes as it has long been for the higher ones. Would attach the people to their king and country by the closest ties, and give every man such a stake in its prosperity as would ensure the last drop of his blood to defend that which was the parental source of all his comforts.

I do not write this without knowing that it will be esteemed wild and visionary ; to those who have sat quietly and seen the poor rates rapidly increasing while they measure not the people's relief but their misery, such ideas must be visionary, for they are in utter contradiction to the common practice. Every man complains of the distemper, but no one proposes a remedy. What difficulty would be found insuperable if commissioners in every hundred and wapontake, or other division, were appointed of the first respectability, without pay or salary, to carry such a plan as this into execution ? What delight

would it not spread among the people to see them so employed? What evil would be felt, what scarcity would be thought of while a system was maturing and gradually coming into effect which was to place every man under the shade of his own vine, his wife milking her cow, and his children weeding the potatoes? —the prison bars of workhouses thrown down, and animated industry driving away sloth and misery?

Compare such a spectacle with that of the poor in a parish enclosing by Act of Parliament; deprecating the measure while in operation, selling their cows when finished, and pouring into the vestry, clamorous for relief.

Having thus given the data which occurred on the journey, and observations on the purport of the information, it will next be proper to answer some objections which have occurred in conversations I have had on the subject.

I. *The idea of giving land in any method is plainly wrong, from the slovenly condition of many of their gardens.*

The Earl of Hardwicke's premiums might be urged as an answer to this objection; if in any district the evil had been found, here are the means of remedying it. To assert that no possible evil could arise is by no means necessary. Our present system possesses a full harvest of evils; yet we have submitted hitherto, because the one object—that the poor do not starve—is effected.

But upon what principle is this objection founded?

The cottager's object in cultivating a few rods of ground is to raise a small spot of potatoes and a few cabbages! Do these confer property in house or land? Do these keep him from the parish? Will the very best cultivation of such a spot render him independent? The capital object which has instigated all the people noticed in the minutes is wanting; and then it is contended, that because they are bad cultivators *without* this main inducement, therefore they would be the same *with* it! Nor should it be forgotten that it is as fair, from a multitude of instances of very well-cultivated gardens, to assert just the contrary of this position, as, from some ill-managed spots, to draw the conclusion that all would be the same.

II. *There are many idle, worthless fathers of poor families that would readily receive what is proposed to be given; but when they had taken up their potatoes, would sell them and their hog, throw up their land, and if they should not run away, at least come to the parish; and if a cow were added, the inducement would be still greater.*

The idea supposes that this worthless father is at present in the parish, and has not run away from his family; that is, he has not run away from misery and wretchedness, but he would do it readily from a much better situation. To such absurdities are men willing to have recourse when it is a question of starting objections. Give him a cow, and his situation is still better. If he sell it and run away, he is ready to commit any crime at present, and would do it to attain

the value of a cow. What bar but the law to prevent him now from stealing your cow and selling it? Were the Legislature to mature a plan on these cases, such possibilities of evil would, doubtless, receive some guard. As to the general idea of their quitting their families, is it not a common crime at present in almost every parish in the kingdom? And why do they do it? Because under the present laws they have not the motive to abstain from it, which they would have were they in a better situation. The system of land would probably be found the very best preventive of this crime. Those who urge such an objection should raise it on facts; in such a parish many poor have land, and they have quitted both land and family. How far must we go to find such an instance, the land being unalienable?

III. *Your cases are themselves imperfect; for in some of them the poor have land, and are yet burthensome.*

The objection, as far as it extends, is perfectly fair; and it shows that there are cases in which land may come into the possession of the poor, and not keep them from a parish who will not make use of the power in their hands. If the governor of a workhouse have the entire management, or any other person who must maintain or receive them if they become chargeable, it may be his interest to give them a small allowance, rather than let them become entirely chargeable by selling their cottage. But the objection is more satisfactorily answered by recurring to the

circumstances: the poor built by means of mortgaging; their whole substance goes in the house—they are destitute of live stock—and the system being in almost every particular faulty, no wonder that some have received parish assistance; though, it is to be remarked, much smaller assistance than other families equally numerous. It is more surprising that so many *thus* established should be able to do without the parish than that some should have applied for relief. The cases at Blofield, Chattris, and Aldershot are decisive on the other side, though all were wretchedly deficient in the means of establishing themselves. It cannot in any fairness be concluded, that because some poor families who have, without any assistance, and struggling against much opposition, partially failed in the acquisition of that entire independency on the parish they aimed at, that therefore they would in like manner fail when properly established in their new situation.

IV. *Should the plan be found practicable where there are waste lands, it does not follow that it could be executed where there are none. Buying land, as proposed in the case of Bocking, could not in many places be done; proprietors would not sell land.*

To propose any one uniform plan that should in all its parts be executed through the whole kingdom, would be wild and visionary; but the *principle* is adapted to all. Various applications of it might be made to suit different situations and circumstances.

Where there are commons and waste lands, all difficulties would vanish ; and where land could be bought, obstructions might not be great ; but that certain places could not be found where this would be impracticable without too strong an arm of power cannot be asserted. In such the renting system might be adopted, which has in so many instances, particularly those capital ones of the Earl of Winchilsea and of Lincolnshire, been productive of most happy effects. To let every other cottager, at a fair rent, land enough for a rood or half an acre of potatoes and the food of one or two cows, fenced, and to find the live stock and seed, would be carrying the principle of property into effect under certain regulations of security. I state it, however, as an object of consideration, as an idea drawn from the minutes, that *property* in land would in very many cases be the more effective, and, perhaps, the cheaper way of doing the business. It is applying the main lever of the poor people's affections and prejudices.

V. *Giving land to the poor would be open to the fraud of one parish enabling a most burthensome family to purchase in another parish, and thereby gain a settlement.*

In the first place, all parishes are at present liable to this fraud ; but were the present propositions accepted, they would not be liable thereby in the least degree ; for can any person be so careless in his attention as to suppose that because a parish is enabled thus to provide for its own poor, that by consequence

strangers would be permitted to settle ? The objection was once urged to me, or I should not have given it a place at present.

VI. *What is to be done with the cottage or land when the father of the family dies ?*

It would be improper for me to propose specific remedies for every difficulty that can occur. But this does not appear an insuperable one, though such case might possibly be found. I suppose the fee of the cottage or land to be in the parish, and the possession granted under an Act of Parliament conditionally, that so long as the father live free from being chargeable, or so long as any of that posterity which were living at the time of the grant, or born to him afterwards, remain unchargeable—so long the cottage, etc., belongs to the family, to be inherited by his widow or son, etc., accepting the property with the burthen annexed ; if the case, from the ages or other circumstances, precludes this, the property would return to the parish, who may allow the widow and her children to remain, or remove them in favour of another family, as the case might require. And if it should be proposed to the unprovided families, under a rent of a certain payment per week, to such widow for a given time, it might be found a means, if land formed part of the premises, not only to provide for the newcomers, but to assist also in the support of those who quitted it. But it would be essential to the plan that the property should be absolute and the possessor unremovable so long as the conditions were complied with. This would

create great frugality and attention in the father so to leave his family as to enable them to preserve the property ; we have every reason to conclude this from what we see in very numerous instances at present among the owners of such premises.

VII. *The choice on theory which poor men may declare when such a proposal is mentioned to them, is not a proof that they would succeed ; they are ignorant of the situation, not having experienced it.*

There is truth here in the literal fact, but very little in the argumentative conclusion. When we see an earnest desire amongst the poor of all descriptions to possess houses of their own, and find that they fix an uncommon value in their minds on being proprietors of land, a fact known in every part of the kingdom, and when these circumstances are in unison with feelings found in every human breast, we may fairly conclude that men who would thus make their choice would also feel every inducement to render it effective, to secure success, and to ensure the permanent possession of what they had so earnestly coveted.

In all the cases quoted, these feelings appear to have had their full operation, for the instances of selling their little possessions are so few that no great stress can be laid on them ; and so many going through the difficulties of the present and last scarcities without parochial assistance, when by selling their land they would not only possess the means of much present indulgence, but be open to future relief from the

parish, proves that they will struggle through great difficulties to *retain* as well as to acquire such properties. Why other men who well know the comforts derived from land (for there is scarcely any vicinity that has not its instances), though they have not experienced them, should not act in the same manner after making the situation their voluntary choice, does not appear fair to expect. To cultivate a garden for potatoes, beans, and cabbages is a business which any man can execute; some would do it with more, some with less skill; but all would do it to their own advantage. They would not be suddenly entrapped into the plan, but would have full time to consider the question and consult with their friends and relations before they made the choice.

VIII. *Wastes are as much property as my house. Will a farmer give up his right of commonage?*

The objection grounds on the tenderness with which the Legislature proceeds when private property is in question.

I will not dispute their meaning; but the poor look to facts, not meanings; and the fact is, that by nineteen enclosure bills in twenty they are injured, in some grossly injured. It may be said that commissioners are sworn to do justice. What is that to the people who suffer? It must be generally known that they suffer in their own opinions, and yet enclosures go on by commissioners, who dissipate the poor people's cows wherever they come, as well those kept legally as those which are not. What is it to

the poor man to be told that the Houses of Parliament are extremely tender of property, while the father of the family is forced to sell his cow and his land because the one is not competent to the other; and being deprived of the only motive to industry, squanders the money, contracts bad habits, enlists for a soldier, and leaves the wife and children to the parish? If enclosures were beneficial to the poor, rates would not rise as in other parishes after an Act to enclose. The poor in these parishes may say, and with truth, *Parliament may be tender of property; all I know is, I had a cow, and an Act of Parliament has taken it from me.* And thousands may make this speech with truth. There is not a man in England more urgent than I am for a general enclosure, but I contend that the felicity of the poor should be fixed by means of enclosure.

Is it therefore possible that any man can be serious when he talks of tenderness to property as a bar to relieving the poor by commons, while above a thousand commons have been enclosed to their direct injury? Or is not this tenderness to operate for the poor in times like these, after having so long worked for the rich without an equal call?

But the objection is unfounded in another respect; it supposes that arrangements by which land should be assigned to the poor are to be made or specified in an Act of Parliament directly depriving men of certain rights of common. This is by no means necessary; there is no dispute either of the right or power of Parliament to ordain any degree of relief to the poor. If local and peculiar circumstances render relief in land unpleasant, it is a motive in such cases of leaving

the choice to parishes; but it would be very easy, in settling the balance between land and money, to give such favour to the former as should induce parishes to prefer it. It would only require a clause enacting that in parishes where there are commons families should receive so much per week per head, or be provided with land, leaving all difficulties to the vestry; they would be ready enough to resort to the common, provided the impediments were removed of an expensive application to Parliament for each enclosure. Private property would remain untouched, and the application of the common would be the act of the parties themselves.

IX. *Your choice of commoners as the basis of your proposal is extraordinary; for everyone knows them to be the most pilfering, worthless, poaching vagabonds that are anywhere to be found; and if the possession of gardens, cows, pigs, and poultry is to make others like them, better far to leave such poor and honest.*

Abundance of circumstances are here taken for granted which would demand much discrimination, and some proof; but, to simplify the argument, we will admit enough of the assertion to give an opponent a plausible ground of objection; but let the following points be had in contemplation.

1. All cottagers who live on commons have not property, and do not therefore come into the sphere of our enquiries. Before the objection can fairly be

made, it is necessary to make this separation, and by no means accuse them in the lump. The accusation may be true of one party, and yet utterly false of the rest. The living by or on a common will not improve the morals of a family, whatever a due portion of property might effect. People are found in such situations, and yet in a state of the lowest poverty. It is not a goose on a common that is to place them in a better condition. And everyone knows that a few thieves will give a bad reputation to a whole hamlet.

2. What sort of reasoning is it that admits sobriety, industry, and frugality, in order to get a cottage and a cow, and then supposes that such possession is to convert such qualities into profligacy and vagabondage? Is it admissible in common sense ? But grant even this to be the fact, what has the system proposed to do with commons ? I contend for enclosures. Spread these commons with cultivation, and give every cottager land enough to feed his cow in winter as well as summer. Take from him the temptation to steal. Every evil you can possibly complain of is the result, not of the system of property, but the want of a sufficiency. The common is a very bad support, give him a better. He is able and willing to pay as high for it as any farmer in the country.

3. Cottagers on commons are encroachers—they encroach on the property of farmers even by the possession of a garden—they must have enemies therefore—the least property cuts them off in very many cases from parochial relief, and their prejudices in favour of property sink them in some cases lower

than others who have none. If this tempts them to be thieves, is the system to be condemned because only half executed? A man with a cottage and a goose is a rogue, who would be honest with a cow and land to feed it. This is not theory, it is fact; I enquired for the families of the worst character at Farnham, and others against whom nothing was suspected; the one had hovels and chickens, the others houses and cows.

But suppose objections to this plan were such as to permit doubts to remain on the practicability of carrying it into execution, this only renders it a proper object of enquiry. First ascertain whether, if it could be effected, it would be a great and permanent relief to a large proportion of the poor. There can be little difficulty in this. The poor themselves, both in and out of the requisite situation, are judges of this point, and the difficulties of execution would be the proper business of a committee expressly appointed for this purpose. The most popular committee that ever sat, whose enquiries would diffuse an idea of comfort through the people. The *search* for relief would prove *relief*. They would understand the object, and bless the men that busied themselves about it.

Nothing has astonished me more than the readiness I have found in so many persons to raise objections to the conclusions I have drawn from these instances, and the strange want of discrimination I have met with in the arguments that have been urged against the system recommended. One would think that the faculties of some men were adapted only to probe ideal evils and analyse imaginary mischief. They seem to forget that

in all enquiries concerning the poor the only fair mode of estimating difficulties and objections is by comparison. What is the present system, and what has been its result ? The amount of poor rates, combined, as it ought ever to be, with the misery and wretchedness attendant, ought to be well understood in these times, or they are never likely to be understood at all. The system here proposed to be substituted, that of PROPERTY in house, land, or live stock, has not, except in one large district, been tried fairly. In that district it has succeeded completely ; but in very many of the cases just instanced, it has not been, properly speaking, *tried* at all. They are circumstances which have almost fortuitously arisen from the mere exertions of some unassisted poor people struggling to support themselves without parochial assistance ; in many cases with inadequate means, incompletely in more, and under great difficulties in all. Such attempts must in their nature have a weakness and insufficiency in them far different from the matured efforts of our poor laws, executed at the expense of millions ; as *different* in force and power as in effect ; the one attended by enormous burthens, which have utterly failed in the effects expected ; the other, without any burthen at all, producing comfort, and where failing, never from principle, but always from insufficient power of execution. The contrast is so great, that if only one case in ten fairly established the possibility of thus providing for the poor, it would surely merit a marked and singular attention, when opposed to the result of the complicated expense and misery flowing from the system of our legal provision.

It is further to be considered, that the means of carrying into effect this system of property are scattered in waste lands over almost every part of the kingdom ; that in other districts land may be purchased beneficially ; and that where these circumstances cannot take place, the renting plan, applicable to all, may be adopted. Thus the extent to which these manifold advantages may be spread is so considerable as to be really a great national object.

For one person to find out that commoners *without property* are notorious rogues, while I show that with property they are honest men ; for another to discover that cottagers in debt for building their house are not always free from parish support, while I prove that without debts they are not burthensome ; for a third to assert that poverty is necessary to make men work, while 700 cases are produced of men who, having cows, are unexceptionably the best labourers in their country ; for a fourth to say that employment by parliamentary enclosing is better than cows, while it is proved that poor rates have risen enormously in parishes *so* enclosed, and not a penny where the poor have all cows ; for an opponent to declare that men would run away from poverty ; what are these difficulties but vain assertions in the teeth of fact, or conclusions from partial views which, however true in fact, are false in argument. In many of these instances the assertions might be assented to, and yet those who make them would be no nearer the object of their reasoning. Discrimination is necessary. At Chattris I instance the case of mere cottages, and without even gardens, keeping families from the

parish. How easy would it be to expatiate on the evils of such a situation. But is the case brought to prove the benefit of such a condition? No; it is brought to prove that this sort of property, even in its most wretched depression, is preferred to parish support. And what is the conclusion? Why, surely, in case of necessity, it would be better to encourage that spirit by adding a cow to the cottage, than crush it at once by forcing the property to be sold for bread to eat!

The same observation might be made on all the cases produced; there is not one which does not, if rightly applied by the reader, go to prove the general principle on which the proposed system grounds; there is not one which does not contrast with the present mode of providing for the poor in a manner that marks the greatest superiority. And I should be wanting to that conviction which I feel in my own mind if I did not declare my entire possession that this is the only practicable method of saving the kingdom from ruin. It is impossible for a country to go on, respecting the poor, as this does at present; the consequences *must* be fatal. At a moment when a general enclosure of wastes is before Parliament to allow such a measure to be carried into execution in conformity with the *practice* hitherto, without entering one voice, however feeble, in defence of the interests of the poor, would have been a wound to the feelings of any man, not lost to humanity, who had viewed the scenes which I have visited.

May God, of His mercy, grant that the Legislature, whenever they take into consideration the subject of

the poor, may give to this part of that momentous subject the attention which it merits ; may enquire into it fully and minutely ; and receive their information from those who are best able to give it, from the poor themselves.

A. Y.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER V

ON ROADS AND ROAD TRAVELLING

Coach Roads of 1802 *as given in Cary's "Itinerary."*

"London to Oxford, Gloucester and Milford Haven" Mail Road.

Oxford.—At the junction of the roads from Abingdon and Gloucester; on right turnpike roads to Woodstock and Bicester, on left Abingdon. Cross the Isis river to

Botley, Berks.—On left a turnpike road to Faringdon. Cross the Isis river and re-enter Oxfordshire.

Eynsham.

Hill Houses.

Shores Green.

Witney.—On right a turnpike road to Woodstock.

Burford.—On right a turnpike road to Stow, on left to Faringdon; about a mile from Burford on left a turnpike road to Cirencester.

Barrington.—The New Inn.

Northleach.—On left a turnpike road to Gloucester; a little further, right to Stow.

Frog Mill Inn.—And thence through Dowdeswell and Charlton Kings to Cheltenham.

About a mile on right of Botley Bridge is Wytham (Earl of Abingdon).

Two miles beyond Eynsham, on right, is Eynsham Hall (Rev. I. Robinson).

Near Burford, on right, see Swinbrook (Robert Fettiplace, Esq.).

At Burford, on right (John Lenthall, Esq.).

A mile from Barrington New Inn on right is Barrington Park (Colonel Grosvenor), and near three miles further is Sherborne (Lord Sherborne).

Differences of route between Oxford and Cheltenham noted from the Eighth Edition of Cary's "Itinerary," dated 1819 (which gives a list of provincial stage coaches).

Botley.—New road avoiding Botley and Eynsham hills.

Burford.—One mile before Burford take new road on left.

Changes in Houses—

Eynsham Hall—Hon. Thos. Parker.

Swinbrook—Lord Redesdale.

Barrington Park—Hon. and Rev. Edward Rice.

Inns at Burford—

The Bull and The George.

TIME TABLE OF COACHES THROUGH BURFORD

(Compiled from Cary's *Itinerary*, Eighth Edition, 1819)

Midnight.	Up Mail from Milford Haven and South Wales to the Golden Cross, London.
1 a.m.	Down Gloucester Post Coach from the Bull and Mouth, London, to the Bell, Gloucester.
1.15 a.m.	Coach from the Angel, Oxford, to Carmarthen and South Wales.
2.30 a.m.	Up Milford Haven Coach to the Bull and Mouth, London.
3.30 a.m.	Down Cheltenham Coach from the Belle Sauvage, London.
4.30 a.m.	Down Mail from the Golden Cross, London, to Milford Haven and South Wales.
6. a.m.	Down Gloucester Mail from the Golden Cross, London, to the Bell, Gloucester.
7 a.m.	Down Milford and Gloucester Mail from the Angel, St. Clement's, London, to the Bell, Gloucester.
7.15 a.m.	Mail Coach from the Angel, Oxford, to Bath (White Hart) and Bristol (the Bush).
8 a.m.	Up Coach (New Post) from the Plough, Cheltenham, to the Golden Cross, London.

9.30 a.m. (On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday) Up Coach (The Express) from the Lamb, Gloucester, to the Bull and Mouth, London.

10 a.m. Up Post Coach from the Plough, Cheltenham, to the Angel, St. Clement's, London.

10.45 a.m. Coach from the George, Cheltenham, to Oxford.

11 a.m. Coach from the George, Cheltenham, to Oxford.

11 a.m. Up Cheltenham Coach from the Royal Hotel to the Bolt-in-Tun, Fleet Street, London.

11.15 a.m. Coach from the Angel, Oxford, to the George, Cheltenham.

11.15 a.m. (In summer) Down Cheltenham Coach from the Old Bell, Holborn, to the Plough, Cheltenham.

11.30 a.m. Up Gloucester Coach from Booth Hall to the Bolt-in-Tun, Fleet Street, London.

11.30 a.m. (In summer) Up Cheltenham Coach from the Plough to the Old Bell, Holborn.

Noon. (In summer) Second Down Cheltenham Coach from the Old Bell to the Plough.

12.30 p.m. (In summer) Second Up Cheltenham Coach from the Plough to the Old Bell.

12.45 p.m. Coach (Royal Sovereign) from the Booth Hall, Gloucester, to the Mitre, Oxford.

1.30 p.m. Coach from the George, Cheltenham, to Oxford.

2 p.m. (On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday)

	Down Gloucester Coach (The Express) from the Bull and Mouth, London, to the Lamb, Gloucester.
2.15 p.m.	(On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) Down Gloucester Coach from the Boar and Castle, London.
3 p.m.	Coach (Royal Sovereign) from the Mitre, Oxford, to Booth Hall, Gloucester.
3 p.m.	Down Cheltenham Coach (sleeping at Oxford) from the White Bear, Piccadilly, London.
3.30 p.m.	Down Cheltenham Coach from the Cross Keys, Wood Street, London.
3.45 p.m.	Mail Coach from Bristol (the Bush) and Bath (White Hart) to the Angel, Oxford.
4 p.m.	Down Cheltenham Post Coach from the Angel, St. Clement's, London, to the Plough, Cheltenham.
4 p.m.	Down Cheltenham Coach (New Post) from the Golden Cross, London, to the Plough, Cheltenham.
4.15 p.m.	Down Cheltenham Light Post Coach from the White Horse, Fetter Lane, London.
4.30 p.m.	Down Gloucester Coach from the Bolt-in-Tun, London, to Booth Hall, Gloucester.
5 p.m.	Down Cheltenham Coach from the Bolt-in-Tun, London, to the Royal Hotel, Cheltenham.
6 p.m.	Up Gloucester Post Coach from the Bell to the Bull and Mouth, London.

7.30 p.m.	Coach from the George, Cheltenham, to Oxford.
8 p.m.	Up Milford and Gloucester Mail to the Angel, St. Clement's, London.
9.30 p.m.	Down Gloucester Post Coach from the Boar and Castle, London.
10 p.m.	(On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday) Down Milford Haven Coach from the Bull and Mouth, London.
11 p.m.	Up Gloucester Mail from the Bell to the Golden Cross, London.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER VI

Richard Davis, in his *Survey of Agriculture of the County of Oxford*[1] made in January, 1794, writes :—

"There needs no better evidence than the great increase of the poor's rates to prove that the present price of labour in husbandry business is not sufficient ; and if it is inadequate when provisions are moderately cheap, it must reduce the labourer and his family to great distress when provisions are dear. It is the remark of a person who often travels in the northern counties where the poor people very rarely use tea or strong beer, that they appear to live as comfortably as the poor of this county did thirty years ago. It is much to be wished, as well for the comfort of the poor as for the good of the community, that the laudable spirit that existed in some degree within these thirty years could be revived, when the poor would exert themselves to the utmost before they would apply to the parish for relief ; whereas they are now not ashamed to apply upon every trifling occasion."

"The Reform Bill swept away at one blow 56 rotten boroughs, returning 112 members ; it partly disfranchised 30 small boroughs, returning with the former 142 members—all of them more or less under

[1] The Bodleian Library, *Gough, Oxford, 103.*

the influence of a few great proprietors. This Bill gave to the counties 65 additional representatives, and conferred the right of sending members to Parliament on no less than 42 new boroughs, including some of the largest towns in England, viz. Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, etc., containing in all a population of 2,500,000 hitherto unrepresented, and having a constituency of about 80,000 electors.

"From the date of the passing of this great Bill the Minister who rules in England must rule *by* the people and *for* the people; if he has not their support he may seize upon the Government for a time, but his fall is inevitable.

"This Bill Sir Robert Peel, night after night, opposed; this Bill the Duke of Wellington denounced, and, in his hatred of all popular rights, exerted himself to the utmost to destroy."

From *Four Years of a Liberal Government*, 1834 (The Bodleian Library, 22873 e. 8).

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER VI

THE Charterville Allotments, a part of Feargus O'Connor's scheme of small holdings, are at Minster Lovell, three miles from Witney, in Oxfordshire.

In 1847 the National Land Society purchased of Mr. Wheeler a farm of 296 acres 2 roods 3 poles for £11,094, subject to a commuted tithe of £89 16s. Of this, 44 acres, with the farmhouse, were sold; and the remainder, 252 acres 2 roods 4 poles, was made into small holdings, each with a house, stable, and pig-sties. The allotments were as follows :—

34 of 4 acres each.
16 ,, 3 ,, ,,
30 ,, 2 ,, ,,

The land was first ploughed at the cost of the Society in general. Then the allotments were apportioned by ballot among the shareholders of the Society, who were chiefly artisans from Lancashire. With each allotment went a small sum as working capital. The basis of distribution was as follows :—

One paid-up share of £2 10s. entitled a member to two acres and a cottage and £15 to start with.

One and a half paid-up shares—£3 15s.—entitled to three acres, a cottage, and £22 10s.

Two paid-up shares—£5—entitled to four acres, a cottage, and £30.

The tenure was leasehold, and the rent for four acres was £10 10s. The first lot-holders, all drawn from large towns, either failed and withdrew, or were turned out for not paying the rent. At the same time it was held that the methods of the Society were illegal, as a lottery, and the Society was wound up. An Act of Parliament was obtained to enable the Society to sell the lots on the Minster Lovell estate (but apparently not on its other estates) and they were sold by auction. Consequently, although leases were granted to those occupying allotments at the time, at rates varying from 45s. to 60s. per acre, the leases could change hands; and a large portion of the ground, instead of being cultivated by the leaseholders, is rented from investors. The usual rent for the house was reckoned at about £4 a year; so that the rents for the holdings work out at about—

£8 to £9 for a two-acre lot.
£11 for a three-acre lot.
£12 to £13 for a four-acre lot.

A calculation of the original expenditure on the estate has been made thus:—

297 acres odd . . .	£11,094
Houses and roads . . .	15,346
Advances to occupiers . .	1,538
	£27,978

In the good times of farming a four-acre lot sold as high as £320 ; more recently one realized £250, and a two-acre lot £180.

The estate is on high ground, sloping slightly towards the east. The soil is thin on a stratum of stone-brash above the local rock. It is said to be too light to benefit by spade husbandry, and to require the treading of sheep for the production of good grain crops. Only a portion will grow wheat ; the yield of barley is only three to four quarters per acre ; the most profitable crop is potatoes. A few years ago these yielded very heavily, so that the demand enabled the owners to raise rents ; and even after the recent bad seasons only two lots are vacant. There does not seem to be much permanent pasture, but a good deal of clover hay is grown. There are no hedges, but a few rail fences where cows are kept. The cows are largely fed on the roadsides. Of late there has been some growing of fruit ; strawberries paid well, being chiefly marketed in Oxford. The potatoes are chiefly marketed in Bristol. The following calculation was given of the payments and receipts of a four-acre lot :—

	£	s.	d.
1 acre barley, 3 quarters at 32s.	4	16	0
1 ,, cone wheat, 3 quarters at 40s.	6	0	0
1½ acres potatoes, 60 bags at 10s.	30	0	0
½ acre vegetables	2	0	0
	£42	16	0

Loss—	£	s.	d.			
Value of seed	2	0	0			
Cost of ploughing	3	0	0			
				£5	0	0
				£37	16	0

Deduct—	£	s.	d.
Rent, tithes, rates and taxes . . .	17	0	0
	£20	16	0

Equal to 8s. per week to the cultivator, or adding 1s. 6d. for the value of the house, 9s. 6d. per week.

It is to be remarked on this calculation that in 1875 the yield of potatoes was as much as 60 bags per acre, but it is doubtful if the average yield is more than 30 bags per acre, or 45 for the 1½ acres above. It must also be recollected that in some years potatoes have not brought more than 6s. per bag, but on the other hand 40s. per quarter is a low price for cone wheat. The barley is said to be generally given to the pig, the reason probably being, not that it is of an unsuitable quality for malting, but that the quantity is too small to be saleable in this way.

(Extracted from an article supplied to me in 1900 by C. D. Sturge, Esq.)

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER VIII

Rates of Postage of Letters in Great Britain in 1819.—From any Post Office in England or Wales to any place not exceeding fifteen miles from that office, 4d.

Above	15 miles	and not exceeding	20 miles	5d.
	20 ,,		30 ,,	6d.
	30 ,,		50 ,,	7d.
	50 ,,		80 ,,	8d.
	80 ,,		120 ,,	9d.
	120 ,,		170 ,,	10d.
	170 ,,		230 ,,	11d.
	230 ,,		300 ,,	12d.
	300 ,,		400 ,,	13d.
	400 ,,		500 ,,	14d.
	500 ,,		600 ,,	15d.

And so increasing, One Penny for a single Letter on every like Excess of one Hundred Miles.

Letters to and from Scotland are charged ½d. more than the above Rates.

Note.—No Letter charged more than Treble, unless the same shall weigh an Ounce ; then to be rated as four single Letters, and so in proportion for every Quarter of an Ounce. Letters to Soldiers and Sailors, if single, charged 1d. only.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER IX

"The Employers' Liability Act is an awful nuisance to these little towns and villages. As a master it pinches me badly, but as a workman (I am both) it was disastrous. Many people who used to buy a pound's worth or two of plants off me, and get me to plant them for them, took fright at my doing anything for them in case of accident, and as I could not go to plant them gave up having the flowers. I do not blame them in the least. At the last election I said to the Liberal sub-agent who stayed here for a time, 'Whatever you do, do not mention the Employers' Liability Act; this place is full of men who are both masters and men, and they detest it'" (William Mann).

A TALE OF TWO RINGS

So it has gone at last, love,
Broken in pieces three,
The ring which meant so much, love—
So much to you and me.

'Twas a poor thing at first, love,
This best I could afford,
But O how much it brought me—
The woman I adored.

Lay it aside with care and love—
If first I buried be
Put one piece in my hand, love—
The others are for thee.

Now come away with me, love
And sate thy woman's pride,
I will buy thee a ring, love,
To suit a rich man's bride.

Thou art a woman all, love,
I see it by thy choice—
The one I would have spoke for
Had my thoughts found a voice.

With *this* ring I thee wed, love,
As in the days of old,
I can do it more safely
Now I know *thou* art gold.

And now we will go home, love,
And if time grant the boon
We'll have a golden wedding
All in the honeymoon!

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